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Balzac, vol. two—Frontis

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

A STUDY OF WOMAN

Another Study of Woman
La Grande Breteche
Peace in the House
The Imaginary Mistress
Albert Savarus
A Woman of Thirty
A Forsaken Lady
La Grenadiere
The Message
Gobseck

Volume Two

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS

New York
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A STUDY OF WOMAN

PREFACE

THERE IS a good deal of inequality in the present collection, which contains work conceived in very different manners and executed at very different times.

The story which used to come first, "La Paix du Ménage," is scarcely worthy of precedence, save as eldest. It belongs to the time when Balzac, though he had found his way, was not yet walking surely in it; and besides, it belongs to a class of work which, though he continued to practice in it almost to the end, never was his happiest class. The attraction which these stories of family broils and rearrangements in "high life" had for Balzac must always be rather inexplicable, except to those who are complaisant enough to allow him the knowledge of that high life, which, though constantly contested by some of the best authorities, though more than dubious to impartial critics, is a sort of religion to extreme Balzacians. In this particular case, too, the intrigue is of scanty interest, and requires a lighter and more airy handling than Balzac could often—perhaps than he could ever—give. The fact is that he was too conscientious for this sort of thing, which in the hands of "Gyp" would have been as thoroughly at home as it is out of place in his.

"La Fausse Maîtresse" is of very different value. It may indeed be called somewhat fantastic, and the final trait, whether false or not to nature, will provoke some critics. But the devotion of Paz is exactly one of those things which suited Balzac best, and which he could handle most effectively. And perhaps the irony is not too severe, though it represents his idol, after having been the object of such a love as his, on the point of surrendering to a worthless *poseur*

like La Palférine, whom, it may be observed in passing, Balzac never brings on the scene except with the result, whether by deliberate purpose or not, of dealing a covert blow at the weakness of women and their proneness to low ideals. It ought, however, to be said in fairness that he seems to have had a sort of admiration for this raff of a Rusticoli himself. Clémentine, despite her lack of steadiness, is not one of his most iconoclastic sketches; and Laginski, though somewhat doubling the notion of Polish foibles—afterward again conveyed in Wenceslas Steinbock, and whether from this cause or some other established to the present day as a tradition in France—has distinct merits and attractions.

The two "Études de femme," to which "La Grande Bretêche" is an appendix, rise gradually from an ordinary to an extraordinary level. The adventure of Madame de Listomère and Rastignac is slight but good; and one rather wishes that Balzac had oftener confined sketches of the sort to limits so suitable for a sketch. The false prude comes out with remarkable success, and if Rastignac does not cut so good a figure in point of cleverness as in some others of his numerous appearances, he is more natural than in some of them.

The stories of the "Autre Etude" are called in the "Répertoire" of MM. Christophe and Cerfberr "*d'exquises causeries.*" It is not certain that all readers will acquiesce in this epithet, which is used several times in the piece by Balzac himself, though I do not remember that the combination of it with *causerie* is textual. In the first place, the discourses of Marsay and Blondet might be called by unfriendly critics rather sermons than *causeries.* In the second, though Marsay is rather less of a "tiger" than in some of his other performances, the coxcombry of the exhibition exceeds its charm, while Blondet's discussion of womankind has the unreality of all these discussions. Montriveau's story is considerably better than either of these; and it leads up very well to "La Grande Bretêche."

This latter is one of the best known of Balzac's short

stories, and may rank among the half dozen best of all. Contrary to a habit which, though not invariable, is too common with him, he is not long in "getting under way," and he does not waste a single stroke in drawing the actual catastrophe. Bianchon, who generally has a good part assigned him, is here unusually lucky. Indeed, the piece is so short and so good that critical dwelling on it is almost an impertinence.

"Albert Savarus," with its enshrined story of "L'Ambitieux par Amour" (something of an oddity for Balzac, who often puts a story within a story, but less formally than this) contains various appeals, and shows not a few of its author's well-known interests in politics, in affairs, in newspapers, not to mention the enumerations of *dots* and fortunes which he never could refuse himself. The affection of Savarus for the Duchesse d'Argaiolo may interest different persons differently. It seems to me a little *fade*. But the character of Rosalie de Watteville is in a very different rank. Here only, except, perhaps, in the case of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose unlucky experiences had emancipated her, has Balzac depicted a girl full of character, individuality, and life. It was apparently necessary that Rosalie should be made not wholly amiable in order to obtain this accession of wits and force, and to be freed from the fatal gift of *candeur*, the curse of the French *ingénue*. Her creator has also thought proper to punish her further, and cruelly, at the end of the book. Nevertheless, though her story may be less interesting than either of theirs, it is impossible not to put her in a much higher rank as a heroine than either Eugénie or Ursule, and not to wish that Balzac had included the conception of her in a more important structure of fiction.

It should, perhaps, be observed that Mademoiselle des Touches, the hostess at whose table the three central stories of this volume were told, and who figures elsewhere, especially in "Béatrix," is one of the not very numerous personages of the "Comédie" who are undoubtedly drawn from a distinguished living original—in this case George Sand.

I must refer to the Introduction to "Béatrix" itself for more about her, it being desirable not to "double" in these short prefaces.

"La Paix du Ménage" formed part of the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" from their first appearance in 1830, and entered with the rest into the "Comédie." Then, and then only, was the dedication to Valentine Surville, Balzac's niece, added. At this latter period "La Fausse Maîtresse" made its first appearance in the same division, having been just before (December, 1841) printed serially in the "Siècle" with five chapters, while in the first volume issue it had ten. The first "Etude de femme" came out in "La Mode" in March, 1830, next year at the end of the "Peau de Chagrin," in 1835 (with a new title, "Profil de Marquise") in the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne," and when the "Comédie" was collected, in its actual position and with its actual title. The bibliography of the next two stories is so complicated that it occupies fourteen of M. de Lovenjoul's pages, and that I despair of presenting any acceptable abstract of it in a small space. Balzac seems to have reserved them for the most exemplary victims of his mania for rehandling. He changed their titles; he took from them and inserted in them passages and episodes afterward removed elsewhere or omitted altogether; he published them in a dozen different places, connections, and forms. "Albert Savarus" had a somewhat less tormented fate, appearing in sixty headed chapters in the "Siècle" for May and June, 1842, and then assuming its place in the "Comédie." But though left there, it also formed part of a two volume issue by Souverain in 1844, in company with "La Muse du département." "Rosalie" was at first named "Philomène."

A STUDY OF WOMAN

Dedicated to the Marquis Jean-Charles di Negro

THE MARQUISE DE LISTOMÈRE is a young woman brought up in the spirit of the Restoration. She has principles, she fasts in season, she takes the Sacrament, she goes very much dressed to balls, to the Bouffons, to the Opera; her spiritual director allows her to combine the sacred and the profane. Always on good terms with the Church and the world, she is an incarnation of the present time, and seems to have taken the word *Legality* for her motto. The Marquise's conduct is marked by exactly enough devotion to enable her, under another Maintenon, to achieve the gloomy piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to adopt the manners and gallantry of the earlier years of his reign, if they ever could return.

Just now she is virtuous from interest, or, perhaps, by taste. Married some seven years since to the Marquis de Listomère, a deputy who expects a peerage, she perhaps thinks that her conduct may promote the ambitions of the family. Some women wait to pass judgment on her till Monsieur de Listomère is made Pair de France, and till she is six-and-thirty—a time of life when most women discover that they are the dupes of social laws.

The Marquis is an insignificant personage; he is in favor at Court; his good qualities, like his faults, are negative; the former can no more give him a reputation for virtue than the latter can give him the sort of brilliancy bestowed by vice. As a deputy he never speaks, but he votes "straight"; and at home, he behaves as he does in the Chamber. He is con-

sidered the best husband in France. Though he is incapable of enthusiasms, he never scolds, unless he is kept waiting. His friends nickname him "Cloudy weather"; and, in fact, there is in him no excessively bright light, and no utter darkness. He is exactly like all the Ministers that have succeeded each other in France since the Charter.

A woman with principles could hardly have fallen into better hands. Is it not a great thing for a virtuous woman to have married a man incapable of a folly? Dandies have been known to venture on the impertinence of slightly pressing the Marquise's hand when dancing with her; they met only looks of scorn, and all have experienced that insulting indifference which, like spring frosts, chills the germs of the fairest hopes. Handsome men, witty men, coxcombs, sentimental men who derive nourishment from sucking the knob of their walking-sticks, men of name and men of fame, men of high birth and of low, all have blenched before her. She has won the right of talking as long and as often as she pleases with men whom she thinks intelligent, without being entered in the calendar of scandal. Some coquettes are capable of pursuing this plan for seven years on end, to gratify their fancy at last; but to ascribe such a covert motive to Madame de Listomère would be to calumniate her. I had been so happy as to meet this Phœnix of a Marquise; she talks well, I am a good listener. I pleased her, and I go to her evening parties. This was the object of my ambition.

Neither plain nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a brilliant complexion, and very red lips; she is tall and well made, has a small, slender foot, which she does not display; her eyes, far from being dulled, as most eyes are in Paris, have a soft gleam which becomes magical when by chance she is animated. You feel there is a soul under this ill-defined personality. When she is interested in the conversation, she reveals the grace that lies buried under the prudery of cold demeanor, and then she is charming. She does not crave for success, and she gets it. We always find the thing we do not seek. This statement is too often true

not to become a proverb one day. It will be the moral of this tale, which I should not allow myself to relate if it were not at this moment the talk of every drawing-room in Paris.

One evening, about a month since, the Marquise de Listomère danced with a young man as modest as he is heedless, full of good qualities, but showing only his bad ones; he is impassioned, and laughs at passion; he has talent, and hides it; he assumes the *savant* with aristocrats, and affects to be aristocratic with savants.

Eugène de Rastignac is one of those very sensible young men who try everything, and seem to sound other men to discover what the future will bring forth. Pending the age when he will be ambitious, he laughs at everything; he has grace and originality—two qualities which are rare, because they exclude each other. Without aiming at success, he talked to Madame de Listomère for about half an hour. While following the deviations of a conversation, which, beginning with "William Tell," went on to the duties of woman, he looked at the Marquise more than once in a way to embarrass her; then he left her, and spoke to her no more all the evening. He danced, sat down to *écarté*, lost a little money, and went home to bed. I have the honor of assuring you that this is exactly what happened. I have added, I have omitted nothing.

The next morning Rastignac woke late, remained in bed, where he gave himself up, no doubt, to some of those morning day-dreams in which a young man glides, like a sylph, behind more than one curtain of silk, wool, or cotton. But such moments, the heavier the body is with sleep, the more nimble is the fancy. Finally Rastignac got up without yawning too much, as so many ill-bred people do, rang for his man-servant, ordered some tea, and drank of it immoderately—which will not seem strange to those who like tea; but, to account for this to those persons who only regard tea as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was writing; he sat at his ease, and his feet were more often on the fire-dogs than in his foot-muff.

Oh! to sit with your feet on the polished bar that rests on the two brackets of a fender, and dream of your love affairs while wrapped in your dressing-gown, is so delightful a thing, that I deeply regret having no mistress, no fire-dogs, and no dressing-gown. When I shall have all those good things, I shall not write my experiences, I shall take the benefit of them.

The first letter Eugène had to write was finished in a quarter of an hour. He folded it, sealed it, and left it lying in front of him without any address. The second letter, begun at eleven o'clock, was not finished till noon. The four pages were written all over.

"That woman runs in my head," said he to himself as he folded the second missive, leaving it there, and intending to address it after ending his involuntary revery. He crossed the fronts of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, stuffed his hands into the pockets of his red cashmere trousers, and threw himself back in a delicious armchair with deep ears, of which the seat and back were set at the comfortable angle of a hundred and twenty degrees. He drank no more tea, but remained passive, his eyes fixed on the little gilt fist which formed the knob of his fire shovel, without seeing the shovel, or the hand, or the gilding. He did not even make up the fire. This was a great mistake! Is it not an intense pleasure to fidget with the fire when dreaming of women? Our fancy lends speech to the little blue tongues which suddenly burst up, and babble on the hearth. We can find a meaning in the sudden and noisy language of a *bourguignon*.

At this word I must pause and insert, for the benefit of the ignorant, an explanation vouchsafed by a very distinguished etymologist, who wishes to remain anonymous. *Bourguignon* is the popular and symbolical name given, ever since the reign of Charles VI., to the loud explosions which result in the ejection on to a rug or a dress of a fragment of charcoal, the germ of a conflagration. The heat, it is said, explodes a bubble of air remaining in the

heart of the wood, in the trail of some gnawing grub. *Inde amor*, *inde Burgundus*. We quake as we see the charred pieces coming down like an avalanche when we had balanced them so industriously between two blazing logs. Oh! making up a wood-fire when you are in love is the material expression of your sentiments.

It was at this moment that I entered Eugène's room; he started violently, and said:

"So there you are, my dear Horace. How long have you been here?"

"I have this moment come."

"Ah!"

He took the two letters, addressed them, and rang for his servant.

"Take these two notes."

And Joseph went without a remark. Excellent servant!

And we proceeded to discuss the expedition to the Morea, in which I wanted to be employed as surgeon. Eugène pointed out that I should lose much by leaving Paris, and we then talked of indifferent things. I do not think I shall be blamed for omitting our conversation.

When Madame de Listomère rose at about two in the afternoon, her maid Caroline handed her a letter, which she read while Caroline was dressing her hair. (An imprudence committed by a great many young wives.)

"Ah, dear angel of love, my treasure of life and happiness!"—on reading these words, the Marquise was going to throw the letter into the fire; but a fancy flashed through her head, which any virtuous woman will understand to a marvel, namely, to see how a man might end who began in this strain. She read on. When she turned her fourth page, she dropped her arms like a person who is tired.

"Caroline," said she, "go and find out who left this letter for me."

"Madame, I took it from M. le Baron de Rastignac's manservant."

There was a long silence.

"Will Madame dress now?"

"No."

"He must be excessively impertinent!" thought the Marquise.—I may ask any woman to make her own commentary.

Madame de Listomère closed hers with a formal resolution to shut her door on Monsieur Eugène, and, if she should meet him in company, to treat him with more than contempt; for his audacity was not to be compared with any of the other instances which the Marquise had at last forgiven. At first she thought she would keep the letter, but, on due reflection, she burned it.

"Madame has just received such a flaming love-letter, and she read it!" said Caroline to the housemaid.

"I never should have thought it of Madame," said the old woman, quite astonished.

That evening the Marquise was at the house of the Marquis de Beauséant, where she would probably meet Rastignac. It was a Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant was distantly related to Monsieur de Rastignac, so the young man could not fail to appear in the course of the evening. At two in the morning, Madame de Listomère, who had stayed so late solely to crush Eugène by her coldness, had waited in vain. A witty writer, Stendahl, has given the whimsical name of crystallization to the process worked out by the Marquise's mind before, during, and after this evening.

Four days later Eugène was scolding his manservant.

"Look here, Joseph; I shall be obliged to get rid of you, my good fellow."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"You do nothing but blunder. Where did you take the two letters I gave you on Friday?"

Joseph was bewildered. Like a statue in a cathedral porch he stood motionless, wholly absorbed in the travail of his ideas. Suddenly he smiled foolishly, and said:

"Monsieur, one was for Madame la Marquise de Listomère, Rue Saint-Dominique, and the other was for Monsieur's lawyer—"

"Are you sure of what you say?"

Joseph stood dumfounded. I must evidently interfere—happening to be present at the moment.

"Joseph is right," said I. Eugène turned round to me. "I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and—"

"And," said Eugène, interrupting me, "was not one of them for Madame de Nucingen?"

"No, by all the devils! And so I supposed, my dear boy, that your heart had pirouetted from the Rue Saint-Lazare to the Rue Saint-Dominique."

Eugène struck his forehead with the palm of his hand, and began to smile. Joseph saw plainly that the fault was none of his.

Now, there are certain moral reflections on which all young men should meditate? Mistake the first: Eugène thought it amusing to have made Madame de Listomère laugh at the blunder that had put her in possession of a love-letter which was not intended for her. Mistake the second: He did not go to see Madame de Listomère till four days after the misadventure, thus giving the thoughts of a virtuous young woman time to crystallize. And there were a dozen more mistakes which must be passed over in silence, to give ladies *ex professo* the pleasure of deducing them for the benefit of those who cannot guess them.

Eugène arrived at the Marquise's door; but as he was going in, the porter stopped him, and told him that Madame de Listomère was out. As he was getting into his carriage again, the Marquis came in.

"Come up, Eugène," said he; "my wife is at home."

Oh! forgive the Marquis. A husband, however admirable, scarcely ever attains to perfection.

Rastignac as he went upstairs discerned the ten fallacies in worldly logic which stood on this page of the fair book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband come in with Eugène, she could not help coloring. The young Baron observed the sudden flush. If the most modest of men never quite loses some little dregs of conceit, which he can no more get rid of than a woman can throw off her inevitable vanities, who can blame Eugène for saying to himself, "What! this stronghold too?"—and he settled his head in his cravat. Though young men are not very avaricious, they all love to add a head to their collection of medals.

Monsieur de Listomère seized on the "Gazette de France," which he saw in a corner by the fireplace, and went to the window to form, by the help of the newspaper, an opinion of his own as to the state of France. No woman, not even a prude, is long in embarrassment even in the most difficult situation in which she can find herself; she seems always to carry in her hand the fig-leaf given to her by our mother Eve. And so, when Eugène, having interpreted the orders given to the porter in a sense flattering to his vanity, made his bow to Madame de Listomère with a tolerably deliberate air, she was able to conceal all her thoughts behind one of those feminine smiles, which are more impenetrable than a King's speech.

"Are you unwell, Madame? You had closed your door."

"No, Monsieur."

"You were going out perhaps?"

"Not at all."

"You are expecting somebody?"

"Nobody."

"If my visit is ill timed, you have only the Marquis to blame. I was obeying your mysterious orders when he himself invited me into the sanctuary."

"Monsieur de Listomère was not in my confidence. There are certain secrets which it is not always prudent to share with one's husband."

The firm, mild tone in which the Marquise spoke these

words, and the imposing dignity of her glance, were enough to make Rastignac feel that he had been in too much haste to plume himself.

"I understand, Madame," said he, laughing; "I must therefore congratulate myself all the more on having met Monsieur le Marquis; he has procured me an opportunity for offering you an explanation, which would be fraught with danger but that you are kindness itself."

The Marquise looked at the young Baron with considerable astonishment, but she replied with dignity.

"On your part, Monsieur, silence will be the best excuse. On my side I promise you to forget entirely—a forgiveness you scarcely merit."

"Forgiveness is needless, Madame, when there has been no offence.—The letter you received," he added in an undertone, "and which you must have thought so unseemly, was not intended for you."

The Marquise smiled in spite of herself; she wished to appear offended.

"Why tell a falsehood?" she replied with an air of disdainful amusement, but in a very friendly tone. "Now that I have scolded you enough, I am quite ready to laugh at a stratagem not devoid of skill. I know some poor women who would be caught by it. 'Good heavens, how he loves me!' they would say." She forced a laugh, and added with an indulgent air, "If we are to remain friends, let me hear nothing more of mistakes of which I cannot be the dupe."

"On my honor, Madame, you are far more so than you fancy," Eugène eagerly replied.

"What are you talking about?" asked Monsieur de Listomère, who for a minute had been listening to the conversation, without being able to pierce the darkness of its meaning.

"Oh, nothing that will interest you," said Madame de Listomère.

The Marquis quietly returned to his paper, saying, "I

see Madame de Mortsauf is dead; your poor brother is at Clochegourde no doubt."

"Do you know, Monsieur," said the Marquise, addressing Eugène, "that you have just made a very impertinent speech?"

"If I did not know the strictness of your principles," he replied simply, "I should fancy you either meant to put ideas into my head which I dare not allow myself, or to wring my secret from me; or perhaps, indeed, you wish to make fun of me."

The Marquise smiled. This smile put Eugène out of patience.

"May you always believe, Madame, in the offence I did not commit!" said he. "And I fervently hope that chance may not lead you to discover in society the person who was intended to read that letter—"

"What! Still Madame de Nucingen?" cried Madame de Listomère, more anxious to master the secret than to be revenged on the young man for his retort.

Eugène reddened. A man must be more than five-and-twenty not to redden when he is blamed for the stupid fidelity which women laugh at only to avoid betraying how much they envy its object. However, he said, calmly enough, "Why not, Madame?"

These are the blunders we commit at five-and-twenty. This confession agitated Madame de Listomère violently; but Eugène was not yet able to analyze a woman's face as seen in a glimpse, or from one side. Only her lips turned white. She rang to have some wood put on the fire, and so obliged Eugène to rise to take leave. "If that is the case," said the Marquise, stopping Eugène by her cold, precise manner, "you will find it difficult, Monsieur, to explain by what chance my name happened to come to your pen. An address written on a letter is not like the first-come crush hat which a man may heedlessly take for his own on leaving a ball."

Eugène, put quite out of countenance, looked at the

Marquise with a mingled expression of stupidity and fatuousness; he felt that he was ridiculous, stammered out some schoolboy speech, and left. A few days later Madame de Listomère had indisputable proof of Eugène's veracity.

For more than a fortnight she has not gone into society.

The Marquis tells every one who asks him the reason of this change: "My wife has a gastric attack."

I, who attend her, and who know her secret, know that she is only suffering from a little nervous crisis, and takes advantage of it to stay quietly at home.

PARIS, *February, 1839.*

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN

To Léon Gozlan as a Token of Literary Good-fellowship

AT PARIS there are almost always two separate parties going on at every ball and rout. First, an official party, composed of the persons invited, a fashionable and much-bored circle. Each one grimaces for his neighbor's eye; most of the younger women are there for one person only; when each woman has assured herself that for that one she is the handsomest woman in the room, and that the opinion is perhaps shared by a few others, a few insignificant phrases are exchanged, such as: "Do you think of going away soon to La Crampade?" "How well Madame de Portenduère sang!" "Who is the little woman with such a load of diamonds?" Or, after firing off some smart epigrams, which give transient pleasure, and leave wounds that rankle long, the groups thin out, the mere lookers-on go away, and the wax-lights burn down to the sconces.

The mistress of the house then waylays a few artists, amusing people or intimate friends, saying, "Do not go yet; we will have a snug little supper." These collect in some small room. The second, the real party, now begins; a party where, as of old, every one can hear what is said, conversation is general, each one is bound to be witty and to contribute to the amusement of all. Everything is made to tell, honest laughter takes the place of the gloom which in company saddens the prettiest faces. In short, where the rout ends pleasure begins.

The Rout, a cold display of luxury, a review of self-conceits in full dress, is one of those English inventions

which tend to *mechanize* other nations. England seems bent on seeing the whole world as dull as itself, and dull in the same way. So this second party is, in some French houses, a happy protest on the part of the old spirit of our light-hearted people. Only, unfortunately, so few houses protest; and the reason is a simple one. If we no longer have many suppers nowadays, it is because never, under any rule, have there been fewer men placed, established, and successful than under the reign of Louis Philippe, when the Revolution began again, lawfully. Everybody is on the march some whither, or trotting at the heels of Fortune. Time has become the costliest commodity, so no one can afford the lavish extravagance of going home to-morrow morning and getting up late. Hence, there is no second soirée now but at the houses of women rich enough to entertain, and since July, 1830, such women may be counted in Paris.

In spite of the covert opposition of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among them Madame d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, have not chosen to give up the share of influence they exercised in Paris, and have not closed their houses.

The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches is noted in Paris as being the last refuge where the old French wit has found a home, with its reserved depths, its myriad subtle byways, and its exquisite politeness. You will there still find grace of manner notwithstanding the conventionalities of courtesy, perfect freedom of talk notwithstanding the reserve which is natural to persons of breeding, and, above all, a liberal flow of ideas. No one there thinks of keeping his thought for a play; and no one regards a story as material for a book. In short, the hideous skeleton of literature at bay never stalks there, on the prowl for a clever sally or an interesting subject.

The memory of one of these evenings especially dwells with me, less by reason of a confidence in which the illustrious de Marsay opened up one of the deepest recesses of woman's heart, than on account of the reflections to which

his narrative gave rise, as to the changes that have taken place in the French woman since the fateful revolution of July.

On that evening chance had brought together several persons, whose indisputable merits have won them European reputations. This is not a piece of flattery addressed to France, for there were a good many foreigners present. And, indeed, the men who most shone were not the most famous. Ingenious repartee, acute remarks, admirable banter, pictures sketched with brilliant precision, all sparkled and flowed without elaboration, were poured out without disdain, but without effort, and were exquisitely expressed and delicately appreciated. The men of the world especially were conspicuous for their really artistic grace and spirit.

Elsewhere in Europe you will find elegant manners, cordiality, genial fellowship, and knowledge; but only in Paris, in this drawing-room, and those to which I have alluded, does the particular wit abound which gives an agreeable and changeful unity to all these social qualities, an indescribable river-like flow which makes this profusion of ideas, of definitions, of anecdotes, of historical incidents, meander with ease. Paris, the capital of taste, alone possesses the science which makes conversation a tourney in which each type of wit is condensed into a shaft, each speaker utters his phrase and casts his experience in a word, in which every one finds amusement, relaxation, and exercise. Here, then, alone, will you exchange ideas; here you need not, like the dolphin in the fable, carry a monkey on your shoulders; here you will be understood, and will not risk staking your gold pieces against base metal.

Here again, secrets neatly betrayed, and talk, light or deep, play and eddy, changing their aspect and hue at every phrase. Eager criticism and crisp anecdotes lead on from one to the next. All eyes are listening, a gesture asks a question, and an expressive look gives the answer. In short, and in a word, everything is wit and mind.

The phenomenon of speech, which, when duly studied

and well handled, is the power of the actor and the story-teller, had never so completely bewitched me. Nor was I alone under the influence of its spell; we all spent a delightful evening. The conversation had drifted into anecdote, and brought out in its rushing course some curious confessions, several portraits, and a thousand follies, which make this enchanting improvisation impossible to record; still, by setting these things down in all their natural freshness and abruptness, their elusive divarications, you may perhaps feel the charm of a real French evening, taken at the moment when the most engaging familiarity makes each one forget his own interests, his personal conceit, or, if you like, his pretensions.

At about two in the morning, as supper ended, no one was left sitting round the table but intimate friends, proved by an intercourse of fifteen years, and some persons of great taste and good breeding, who knew the world. By tacit agreement, perfectly carried out, at supper every one renounced his pretensions to importance. Perfect equality set the tone. But indeed there was no one present who was not very proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches always insists on her guests remaining at table till they leave, having frequently remarked the change which a move produces in the spirit of a party. Between the dining-room and the drawing-room the charm is destroyed. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author after shaving are different from those he had before. If Sterne is right, may it not be boldly asserted that the frame of mind of a party at table is not the same as that of the same persons returned to the drawing-room? The atmosphere is not heady, the eye no longer contemplates the brilliant disorder of the dessert, lost are the happy effects of that laxness of mood, that benevolence which comes over us while we remain in the humor peculiar to the well-filled man, settled comfortably on one of the springy chairs which are made in these days. Perhaps we are more ready to talk face to face with the dessert and in the society of good wine,

during the delightful interval when every one may sit with an elbow on the table and his head resting on his hand. Not only does every one like to talk then, but also to listen. Digestion, which is almost always attent, is loquacious or silent, as characters differ. Then every one finds his opportunity.

Was not this preamble necessary to make you know the charm of the narrative, by which a celebrated man, now dead, depicted the innocent jesuitry of woman, painting it with the subtlety peculiar to persons who have seen much of the world, and which makes statesmen such delightful story-tellers when, like Prince Talleyrand and Prince Metternich, they vouchsafe to tell a story?

De Marsay, prime minister for some six months, had already given proofs of superior capabilities. Those who had known him long were not indeed surprised to see him display all the talents and various aptitudes of a statesman; still it might yet be a question whether he would prove to be a solid politician, or had merely been molded in the fire of circumstance. This question had just been asked by a man whom he had made préfet, a man of wit and observation, who had for a long time been a journalist, and who admired de Marsay without infusing into his admiration that dash of acrid criticism by which, in Paris, one superior man excuses himself from admiring another.

"Was there ever," said he, "in your former life, any event, any thought or wish which told you what your vocation was?" asked Emile Blondet; "for we all, like Newton, have our apple, which falls and leads us to the spot where our faculties develop—"

"Yes," said de Marsay; "I will tell you about it."

Pretty women, political dandies, artists, old men, de Marsay's intimate friends—all settled themselves comfortably, each in his favorite attitude, to look at the Minister. Need it be said that the servants had left, that the doors were shut, and the curtains drawn over them? The silence was so complete that the murmurs of the coachmen's voices

could be heard from the courtyard, and the pawing and champing made by horses when asking to be taken back to their stable.

"The statesman, my friends, exists by one single quality," said the Minister, playing with his gold and mother-of-pearl dessert knife. "To wit: the power of always being master of himself; of profiting more or less, under all circumstances, by every event, however fortuitous; in short, of having within himself a cold and disinterested other self, who looks on as a spectator at all the chances of life, noting our passions and our sentiments, and whispering to us in every case the judgment of a sort of moral ready-reckoner."

"That explains why a statesman is so rare a thing in France," said old Lord Dudley.

"From a sentimental point of view, this is horrible," the Minister went on. "Hence, when such a phenomenon is seen in a young man—Richelieu, who, when warned overnight by a letter of Concini's peril, slept till midday, when his benefactor was to be killed at ten o'clock—or say Pitt, or Napoleon, he is a monster. I became such a monster at a very early age, thanks to a woman."

"I fancied," said Madame de Montcornet with a smile, "that more politicians were undone by us than we could make."

"The monster of which I speak is a monster just because he withstands you," replied de Marsay, with a little ironical bow.

"If this is a love-story," the Baronne de Nucingen interposed, "I request that it may not be interrupted by any reflections."

"Reflection is so antipathetic to it!" cried Joseph Bridau.

"I was seventeen," de Marsay went on; "the Restoration was being consolidated; my old friends know how impetuous and fervid I was then. I was in love for the first time, and I was—I may say so now—one of the handsomest young fellows in Paris. I had youth and good looks, two advantages

due to good fortune, but of which we are all as proud as of a conquest. I must be silent as to the rest.—Like all youths, I was in love with a woman six years older than myself. No one of you here," said he, looking carefully round the table, "can suspect her name or recognize her. Ronquerolles alone, at the time, ever guessed my secret. He has kept it well, but I should have feared his smile. However, he is gone," said the Minister, looking round.

"He would not stay to supper," said Madame de Nucingen.

"For six months, possessed by my passion," de Marsay went on, "but incapable of suspecting that it had overmastered me, I had abandoned myself to that rapturous idolatry which is at once the triumph and the frail joy of the young. I treasured *her* old gloves; I drank an infusion of the flowers *she* had worn; I got out of bed at night to go and gaze at *her* window. All my blood rushed to my heart when I inhaled the perfume she used. I was miles away from knowing that woman is a stove with a marble casing."

"Oh! spare us your terrible verdicts," cried Madame de Montcornet with a smile.

"I believe I should have crushed with my scorn the philosopher who first uttered this terrible but profoundly true thought," said de Marsay. "You are all far too keen-sighted for me to say any more on that point. These few words will remind you of your own follies.

"A great lady if ever there was one, a widow without children—oh! all was perfect—my idol would shut herself up to mark my linen with her hair; in short, she responded to my madness by her own. And how can we fail to believe in passion when it has the guarantee of madness?

"We each devoted all our minds to concealing a love so perfect and so beautiful from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. And what charm we found in our escapades! Of her I will say nothing. She was perfection then, and to this day is considered one of the most beautiful women in Paris; but at that time a man would have endured death

to win one of her glances. She had been left with an amount of fortune sufficient for a woman who loved and was adored; but the Restoration, to which she owed renewed lustre, made it seem inadequate in comparison with her name. In my position I was so fatuous as never to dream of a suspicion. Though my jealousy would have been of a hundred and twenty Othello-power, that terrible passion slumbered in me as gold in the nugget. I would have ordered my servant to thrash me if I had been so base as ever to doubt the purity of that angel—so fragile and so strong, so fair, so artless, pure, spotless, and whose blue eye allowed my gaze to sound it to the very depths of her heart with adorable submissiveness. Never was there the slightest hesitancy in her attitude, her look, or word; always white and fresh, and ready for the Beloved like the Oriental Lily of the 'Song of Songs'! Ah! my friends," sadly exclaimed the Minister, grown young again, "a man must hit his head very hard on the marble to dispel that poem!"

This cry of nature, finding an echo in the listeners, spurred the curiosity he had excited in them with so much skill.

"Every morning, riding Sultan—the fine horse you sent me from England," de Marsay went on, addressing Lord Dudley, "I rode past her open carriage, the horses' pace being intentionally reduced to a walk, and read the order of the day signalled to me by the flowers of her bouquet in case we were unable to exchange a few words. Though we saw each other almost every evening in society, and she wrote to me every day, to deceive the curious and mislead the observant we had adopted a scheme of conduct: never to look at each other; to avoid meeting; to speak ill of each other. Self-admiration, swagger, or playing the disdained swain—all these old manœuvres are not to compare on either part with a false passion professed for an indifferent person and an air of indifference toward the true idol. If two lovers will only play that game, the world will always be deceived; but then they must be very secure of each other.

"Her stalking-horse was a man in high favor, a courtier,

cold and sanctimonious, whom she never received at her own house. This little comedy was performed for the benefit of simpletons and drawing-room circles, who laughed at it. Marriage was never spoken of between us; six years' difference of age might give her pause; she knew nothing of my fortune, of which, on principle, I have always kept the secret. I, on my part, fascinated by her wit and manners, by the extent of her knowledge and her experience of the world, would have married her without a thought. At the same time, her reserve charmed me. If she had been the first to speak of marriage in a certain tone, I might perhaps have noted it as vulgar in that accomplished soul.

"Six months, full and perfect—a diamond of the purest water! That has been my portion of love in this base world.

"One morning, attacked by the feverish stiffness which marks the beginning of a cold, I wrote her a line to put off one of these secret festivals which are buried under the roofs of Paris like pearls in the sea. No sooner was the letter sent than remorse seized me: she will not believe that I am ill! thought I. She was wont to affect jealousy and suspiciousness.—When jealousy is genuine," said de Marsay, interrupting himself, "it is the visible sign of a unique passion."

"Why?" asked the Princess de Cadignan eagerly.

"Unique and true love," said de Marsay, "produces a sort of corporeal apathy attuned to the contemplation into which one falls. Then the mind complicates everything; it works on itself, pictures its fancies, turns them into reality and torment; and such jealousy is as delightful as it is distressing."

A foreign minister smiled as, by the light of memory, he felt the truth of this remark.

"Besides," de Marsay went on, "I said to myself, why miss a happy hour? Was it not better to go, even though feverish? And, then, if she learns that I am ill, I believe her capable of hurrying here and compromising herself. I made an effort; I wrote a second letter, and carried it myself, for my confidential servant was now gone. The river lay

between us. I had to cross Paris; but at last, within a suitable distance of her house, I caught sight of a messenger; I charged him to have the note sent up to her at once, and I had the happy idea of driving past her door in a hackney cab to see whether she might not by chance receive the two letters together. At the moment when I arrived it was two o'clock; the great gate opened to admit a carriage. Whose? —That of the stalking-horse!

"It is fifteen years since—well, even while I tell the tale, I, the exhausted orator, the Minister dried up by the friction of public business, I still feel a surging in my heart and the hot blood about my diaphragm. At the end of an hour I passed once more; the carriage was still in the courtyard! My note no doubt was in the porter's hands. At last, at half-past three, the carriage drove out. I could observe my rival's expression; he was grave, and did not smile; but he was in love, and no doubt there was business in hand.

"I went to keep my appointment; the queen of my heart met me; I saw her calm, pure, serene. And here I must confess that I have always thought that Othello was not only stupid, but showed very bad taste. Only a man who is half a negro could behave so: indeed Shakespeare felt this when he called his play 'The Moor of Venice.' The sight of the woman we love is such a balm to the heart that it must dispel anguish, doubt, and sorrow. All my rage vanished. I could smile again. Hence this cheerfulness, which at my age now would be the most atrocious dissimulation, was the result of my youth and my love. My jealousy once buried, I had the power of observation. My ailing condition was evident; the horrible doubts that had fermented in me increased it. At last I found an opening for putting in these words: 'You have had no one with you this morning?' making a pretext of the uneasiness I had felt in the fear lest she should have disposed of her time after receiving my first note.—'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'only a man could have such ideas! As if I could think of anything but your suffering. Till the moment when I received your second note I could think only of how I

could contrive to go to see you.'—'And you were alone?'—'Alone,' said she, looking at me with a face of innocence so perfect that it must have been his distrust of such a look as that which made the Moor kill Desdemona. As she lived alone in the house, the word was a fearful lie. One single lie destroys the absolute confidence which to some souls is the very foundation of happiness.

"To explain to you what passed in me at that moment it must be assumed that we have an internal self of which the exterior *I* is but the husk; that this self, as brilliant as light, is as fragile as a shade—well, that beautiful self was in me thenceforth forever shrouded in crape. Yes; I felt a cold and fleshless hand cast over me the winding-sheet of experience, dooming me to the eternal mourning into which the first betrayal plunges the soul. As I cast my eyes down that she might not observe my dizziness, this proud thought somewhat restored my strength: 'If she is deceiving you, she is unworthy of you!'

"I ascribed my sudden reddening and the tears which started to my eyes to an attack of pain, and the sweet creature insisted on driving me home with the blinds of the cab drawn. On the way she was full of a solicitude and tenderness that might have deceived the Moor of Venice whom I have taken as a standard of comparison. Indeed, if that great child were to hesitate two seconds longer, every intelligent spectator feels that he would ask Desdemona's forgiveness. Thus, killing the woman is the act of a boy.—She wept as we parted, so much was she distressed at being unable to nurse me herself. She wished she were my valet, in whose happiness she found a cause of envy, and all this was as elegantly expressed, oh! as Clarissa might have written in her happiness. There is always a precious ape in the prettiest and most angelic woman!"

At these words all the women looked down, as if hurt by this brutal truth so brutally stated.

"I will say nothing of the night, nor of the week I spent," de Marsay went on. "I discovered that I was a statesman."

It was so well said that we all uttered an admiring exclamation.

"As I thought over the really cruel vengeance to be taken on a woman," said de Marsay, continuing his story, "with infernal ingenuity—for, as we had loved each other, some terrible and irreparable revenges were possible—I despised myself, I felt how common I was, I insensibly formulated a horrible code—that of Indulgence. In taking vengeance on a woman, do we not in fact admit that there is but one for us, that we cannot do without her? And, then, is revenge the way to win her back? If she is not indispensable, if there are other women in the world, why not grant her the right to change which we assume?

"This, of course, applies only to passion; in any other sense it would be socially wrong. Nothing more clearly proves the necessity for indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion. The two sexes must be chained up, like wild beasts as they are, by inevitable law, deaf and mute. Eliminate revenge, and infidelity in love is nothing. Those who believe that for them there is but one woman in the world must be in favor of vengeance, and then there is but one form of it—that of Othello.

"Mine was different."

The words produced in each of us the imperceptible movement which newspaper writers represent in Parliamentary reports by the words: *great sensation.*

"Cured of my cold, and of my pure, absolute, divine love, I flung myself into an adventure, of which the heroine was charming, and of a style of beauty utterly opposed to that of my deceiving angel. I took care not to quarrel with this clever woman, who was so good an actress, for I doubt whether true love can give such gracious delights as those lavished by such a dexterous fraud. Such refined hypocrisy is as good as virtue.—I am not speaking to you Englishwomen, my lady," said the Minister suavely, addressing Lady Barimore, Lord Dudley's daughter. "I tried to be the same lover.

"I wished to have some of my hair worked up for my new angel, and I went to a skilled artist who at that time dwelt in the Rue Boucher. The man had a monopoly of capillary keepsakes, and I mention his address for the benefit of those who have not much hair; he has plenty of every kind and every color. After I had explained my order, he showed me his work. I then saw achievements of patience surpassing those which the story-books ascribe to fairies, or which are executed by prisoners. He brought me up to date as to the caprices and fashions governing the use of hair. 'For the last year,' said he, 'there has been a rage for marking linen with hair; happily I had a fine collection of hair and skilled needlewomen.'—On hearing this a suspicion flashed upon me; I took out my handkerchief and said, 'So this was done in your shop, with false hair?'—He looked at the handkerchief, and said, 'Ay! that lady was very particular, she insisted on verifying the tint of the hair. My wife herself marked those handkerchiefs. You have there, sir, one of the finest pieces of work we have ever executed.' Before this last ray of light I might have believed something —might have taken a woman's word. I left the shop still having faith in pleasure, but where love was concerned I was as atheistical as a mathematician.

"Two months later I was sitting by the side of the ethereal being in her boudoir, on her sofa; I was holding one of her hands—they were very beautiful—and we scaled the Alps of sentiment, culling their sweetest flowers, and pulling off the daisy-petals; there is always a moment when one pulls daisies to pieces, even if it is in a drawing-room and there are no daisies. At the intensest moment of tenderness, and when we are most in love, love is so well aware of its own short duration that we are irresistibly urged to ask, 'Do you love me? Will you love me always?' I seized the elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so full-blown, to lead her to tell her most delightful lies, in the enchanting language of rapturous exaggeration and high-flown poetry peculiar to love. Charlotte displayed her choicest allurements: She

could not live without me; I was to her the only man in the world; she feared to weary me, because my presence bereft her of all her wits; with me all her faculties were lost in love; she was indeed too tender to escape alarms; for the last six months she had been seeking some way to bind me to her eternally, and God alone knew that secret; in short, I was her god!"

The women who heard de Marsay seemed offended by seeing themselves so well acted, for he seconded the words by airs, and sidelong attitudes, and mincing grimaces which were quite illusory.

"At the very moment when I might have believed these adorable falsehoods, as I still held her right hand in mine, I said to her, 'When are you to marry the Duke?'

"The thrust was so direct, my gaze met hers so boldly, and her hand lay so tightly in mine, that her start, slight as it was, could not be disguised; her eyes fell before mine, and a faint blush colored her cheeks.—'The Duke! What do you mean?' she said, affecting great astonishment.—'I know everything,' replied I; 'and in my opinion you should delay no longer; he is rich; he is a duke; but he is more than devout, he is religious! I am sure, therefore, that you have been faithful to me, thanks to his scruples. You cannot imagine how urgently necessary it is that you should compromise him with himself and with God; short of that you will never bring him to the point.'—'Is this a dream?' said she, pushing her hair from her forehead, fifteen years before Malibran, with the gesture which Malibran has made so famous.—'Come, do not be childish, my angel,' said I, trying to take her hands; but she folded them before her with a little prudish and indignant mien.—'Marry him, you have my permission,' said I, replying to this gesture by using the formal *vous* instead of *tu*. 'Nay, better, I beg you to do so.'—'But,' cried she, falling at my knees, 'there is some horrible mistake; I love no one in the world but you; you may demand any proofs you please.'—'Rise, my dear,' said I, 'and do me the honor of being truthful.'—'As before God.'

—'Do you doubt my love?'—'No.'—'Nor my fidelity?'—'No.'—'Well, I have committed the greatest crime,' I went on. 'I have doubted your love and your fidelity. Between two intoxications I looked calmly about me.'—'Calmly!' sighed she. 'That is enough, Henri; you no longer love me.'

"She had at once found, you perceive, a loophole for escape. In scenes like these an adverb is dangerous. But, happily, curiosity made her add: 'And what did you see? Have I ever spoken of the Duke excepting in public? Have you detected in my eyes—?'—'No,' said I, 'but in his. And you have eight times made me go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin to see you listening to the same mass as he.'—'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'then I have made you jealous!'—'Oh! I only wish I could be!' said I, admiring the pliancy of her quick intelligence, and these acrobatic feats which can only be successful in the eyes of the blind. 'But by dint of going to church I have become very incredulous. On the day of my first cold, and your first treachery, when you thought I was in bed, you received the Duke, and you told me you had seen no one.'—'Do you know that your conduct is infamous?'—'In what respect? I consider your marriage to the Duke an excellent arrangement; he gives you a great name, the only rank that suits you, a brilliant and distinguished position. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should be doing you a wrong if I placed any obstacle in the way of this prospect, this distinguished life, this splendid alliance. Ah! Charlotte, some day you will do me justice by discovering how unlike my character is to that of other young men. You would have been compelled to deceive me; yes, you would have found it very difficult to break with me, for he watches you. It is time that we should part, for the Duke is rigidly virtuous. You must turn prude; I advise you to do so. The Duke is vain; he will be proud of his wife.'—'Oh!' cried she, bursting into tears, 'Henri, if only you had spoken! Yes, if you had chosen'—it was I who was to blame, you understand—'we would have gone to live all

our days in a corner, married, happy, and defied the world.'—'Well, it is too late now,' said I, kissing her hands, and putting on a victimized air.—'Good God! But I can undo it all!' said she.—'No, you have gone too far with the Duke. I ought indeed to go a journey to part us more effectually. We should both have reason to fear our own affection—'—'Henri, do you think the Duke has any suspicions?' I was still 'Henri,' but the *tu* was lost forever.—'I do not think so,' I replied, assuming the manner of a friend; 'but be as devout as possible, reconcile yourself to God, for the Duke waits for proofs; he hesitates, you must bring him to the point.'

"She rose, and walked twice round the boudoir in real or affected agitation; then she no doubt found an attitude and a look beseeming the new state of affairs, for she stopped in front of me, held out her hand, and said in a voice broken by emotion, 'Well, Henri, you are loyal, noble, and a charming man; I shall never forget you.'

"These were admirable tactics. She was bewitching in this transition of feeling, indispensable to the situation in which she wished to place herself in regard to me. I fell into the attitude, the manners, and the look of a man so deeply distressed that I saw her too newly assumed dignity giving way; she looked at me, took my hand, drew me along almost, threw me on to the sofa, but quite gently, and said after a moment's silence, 'I am dreadfully unhappy, my dear fellow. Do you love me?'—'Oh! yes.'—'Well, then, what will become of you?' "

At this point the women all looked at each other.

"Though I can still suffer when I recall her perfidy, I still laugh at her expression of entire conviction and sweet satisfaction that I must die, or at any rate sink into perpetual melancholy," de Marsay went on. "Oh! do not laugh yet!" he said to his listeners; "there is better to come. I looked at her very tenderly after a pause, and said to her, 'Yes, that is what I have been wondering.'—'Well, what will you do?'—'I asked myself that the day after my

cold.'—'And—?' she asked with eager anxiety.—'And I have made advances to the little lady to whom I was supposed to be attached.'

"Charlotte started up from the sofa like a frightened doe, trembling like a leaf, gave me one of those looks in which women forego all their dignity, all their modesty, their refinement, and even their grace, the sparkling glitter of a hunted viper's eye when driven into a corner, and said, 'And I have loved this man! I have struggled! I have—' On this last thought, which I leave you to guess, she made the most impressive pause I ever heard.—'Good God!' she cried, 'how unhappy are we women! we never can be loved. To you there is nothing serious in the purest feelings. But never mind; when you cheat us you still are our dupes!'—'I see that plainly,' said I, with a stricken air; 'you have far too much wit in your anger for your heart to suffer from it.'—This modest epigram increased her rage; she found some tears of vexation. 'You disgust me with the world and with life,' she said; 'you snatch away all my illusions; you deprave my heart.'

"She said to me all that I had a right to say to her, and with a simple effrontery, an artless audacity, which would certainly have nailed any man but me on the spot.—'What is to become of us poor women in a state of society such as Louis XVIII.'s charter has made it?'—(Imagine how her words had run away with her.)—'Yes, indeed, we are born to suffer. In matters of passion we are always superior to you, and you are beneath all loyalty. There is no honesty in your hearts. To you love is a game in which you always cheat.'—'My dear,' said I, 'to take anything serious in society nowadays would be like making romantic love to an actress.'—'What a shameless betrayal! It was deliberately planned!'—'No, only a rational issue.'—'Good-by, Monsieur de Marsay,' said she; 'you have deceived me horribly.'—'Surely,' I replied, taking up a submissive attitude, 'Madame la Duchesse will not remember Charlotte's grievances?'—'Certainly,' she answered bitterly.—'Then, in fact,

you hate me?'—She bowed, and I said to myself, 'There is something still left!'

"The feeling she had when I parted from her allowed her to believe that she still had something to avenge. Well, my friends, I have carefully studied the lives of men who have had great success with women, but I do not believe that the Maréchal de Richelieu, or Lauzun, or Louis de Valois ever effected a more judicious retreat at the first attempt. As to my mind and heart, they were cast in a mold then and there, once for all, and the power of control I thus acquired over the thoughtless impulses which make us commit so many follies gained me the admirable presence of mind you all know."

"How deeply I pity the second!" exclaimed the Baronne de Nucingen. A scarcely perceptible smile on de Marsay's pale lips made Delphine de Nucingen color.

"How we do forget!" said the Baron de Nucingen.

The great banker's simplicity was so extremely droll, that his wife, who was de Marsay's "second," could not help laughing like every one else.

"You are all ready to condemn the woman," said Lady Dudley. "Well, I quite understand that she did not regard her marriage as an act of inconstancy. Men will never distinguish between constancy and fidelity.—I know the woman whose story Monsieur de Marsay has told us, and she is one of the last of your truly great ladies."

"Alas! my lady, you are right," replied de Marsay. "For very nearly fifty years we have been looking on at the progressive ruin of all social distinctions. We ought to have saved our women from this great wreck, but the Civil Code has swept its levelling influence over their heads. However terrible the words, they must be spoken: Duchesses are vanishing, and marquises too! As to the baronesses—I must apologize to Madame de Nucingen, who will become a countess when her husband is made a peer of France—baronesses have never succeeded in getting people to take them seriously."

"Aristocracy begins with the viscountess," said Blondet with a smile.

"Countesses will survive," said de Marsay. "An elegant woman will be more or less of a countess—a countess of the Empire or of yesterday, a countess of the old block, or, as they say in Italy, a countess by courtesy. But as to the great lady, she died out with the dignified splendor of the last century, with powder, patches, high-heeled slippers, and stiff bodices with a delta stomacher of bows. Duchesses in these days can pass through a door without any need to widen it for their hoops. The Empire saw the last of gowns with trains! I am still puzzled to understand how a sovereign who wished to see his drawing-room swept by ducal satin and velvet did not make indestructible laws. Napoleon never guessed the results of the Code he was so proud of. That man, by creating duchesses, founded the race of our 'ladies' of to-day—the indirect offspring of his legislation."

"It was logic, handled as a hammer by boys just out of school and by obscure journalists, which demolished the splendors of the social state," said the Comte de Vandenesse. "In these days every rogue who can hold his head straight in his collar, cover his manly bosom with half an ell of satin by way of a cuirass, display a brow where apocryphal genius gleams under curling locks, and strut in a pair of patent-leather pumps graced by silk socks which cost six francs, screws his eyeglass into one of his eye-sockets by puckering up his cheek, and whether he be an attorney's clerk, a contractor's son, or a banker's bastard, he stares impertinently at the prettiest duchess, appraises her as she walks downstairs, and says to his friend—dressed by Buisson, as we all are, and mounted in patent-leather like any duke himself—'There, my boy, that is a perfect lady.'"

"You have not known how to form a party," said Lord Dudley; "it will be a long time yet before you have a policy. You talk a great deal in France about organizing

labor, and you have not yet organized property. So this is what happens: Any duke—and even in the time of Louis XVIII. and Charles X. there were some left who had two hundred thousand francs a year, a magnificent residence, and a sumptuous train of servants—well, such a duke could live like a great lord. The last of these great gentlemen in France was the Prince de Talleyrand.—This duke leaves four children, two of them girls. Granting that he has great luck in marrying them all well, each of these descendants will have but sixty or eighty thousand francs a year now; each is the father or mother of children, and consequently obliged to live with the strictest economy in a flat on the ground floor or first floor of a large house. Who knows if they may not even be hunting a fortune? Henceforth the eldest son's wife, a duchess in name only, has no carriage, no people, no opera-box, no time to herself. She has not her own rooms in the family mansion, nor her fortune, nor her pretty toys; she is buried in marriage as a wife in the Rue Saint-Denis is buried in trade; she buys socks for her dear little children, nurses them herself, and keeps an eye on her girls, whom she no longer sends to school at a convent. Thus your noblest dames have been turned into worthy brood-hens."

"Alas! it is true," said Joseph Bridau. "In our day we cannot show those beautiful flowers of womanhood which graced the golden ages of the French Monarchy. The great lady's fan is broken. A woman has nothing now to blush for; she need not slander or whisper, hide her face or reveal it. A fan is of no use now but for fanning herself. When once a thing is no more than what it is, it is too useful to be a form of luxury."

"Everything in France has aided and abetted the 'perfect lady,'" said Daniel d'Arthez. "The aristocracy has acknowledged her by retreating to the recesses of its landed estates, where it has hidden itself to die—emigrating inland before the march of ideas, as of old to foreign lands before that of the masses. The women who could

have founded European *salons*, could have guided opinion and turned it inside out like a glove, could have ruled the world by ruling the men of art or of intellect who ought to have ruled it, have committed the blunder of abandoning their ground; they were ashamed of having to fight against the citizen class drunk with power, and rushing out on to the stage of the world, there to be cut to pieces perhaps by the barbarians who are at its heels. Hence, where the middle class insist on seeing princesses, these are really only ladylike young women. In these days princes can find no great ladies whom they may compromise; they cannot even confer honor on a woman taken up at random. The Duc de Bourbon was the last prince to avail himself of this privilege."

"And God alone knows how dearly he paid for it!" said Lord Dudley.

"Nowadays, princes have lady-like wives, obliged to share their opera-box with other ladies; royal favor could not raise them higher by a hair-breadth; they glide unremarkable between the waters of the citizen class and those of the nobility—not altogether noble nor altogether *bourgeoises*," said the Marquise de Rochegude acridly.

"The press has fallen heir to the Woman," exclaimed Rastignac. "She no longer has the quality of a spoken *feuilleton*—delightful calumnies graced by elegant language. We read *feuilletons* written in a dialect which changes every three years, society papers about as mirthful as an undertaker's mute, and as light as the lead of their type. French conversation is carried on from one end of the country to the other in a revolutionary jargon, through long columns of type printed in old mansions where a press groans in the place where formerly elegant company used to meet."

"The knell of the highest society is tolling," said a Russian Prince. "Do you hear it? And the first stroke is your modern word *lady*."

"You are right, Prince," said de Marsay. "The 'perfect lady,' issuing from the ranks of the nobility, or sprouting

from the citizen class, and the product of every soil, even of the provinces, is the expression of these times, a last remaining embodiment of good taste, grace, wit, and distinction, all combined, but dwarfed. We shall see no more great ladies in France, but there will be 'ladies' for a long time, elected by public opinion to form an Upper Chamber of women, and who will be among the fair sex what a 'gentleman' is in England."

"And that they call progress!" exclaimed Mademoiselle des Touches. "I should like to know where the progress lies."

"Why, in this," said Madame de Nucingen. "Formerly a woman might have the voice of a fish-seller, the walk of a grenadier, the face of an impudent courtesan, her hair too high on her forehead, a large foot, a thick hand—she was a great lady in spite of it all; but in these days, even if she were a Montmorency—if a Montmorency would ever be such a creature—she would not be a lady."

"But what do you mean by a 'perfect lady'?" asked Count Adam Laginski.

"She is a modern product, a deplorable triumph of the elective system as applied to the fair sex," said the Minister. "Every revolution has a word of its own which epitomizes and depicts it."

"You are right," said the Russian, who had come to make a literary reputation in Paris. "The explanation of certain words added from time to time to your beautiful language would make a magnificent history. *Organise*, for instance, is the word of the Empire, and sums up Napoleon completely."

"But all that does not explain what is meant by a lady!" the young Pole exclaimed, with some impatience.

"Well, I will tell you," said Emile Blondet to Count Adam. "One fine morning you go for a saunter in Paris. It is past two, but five has not yet struck. You see a woman coming toward you; your first glance at her is like the pref ace to a good book, it leads you to expect a world of ele-

gance and refinement. Like a botanist over hill and dale in his pursuit of plants, among the vulgarities of Paris life you have at last found a rare flower. This woman is attended by two very distinguished-looking men, of whom one, at any rate, wears an order; or else a servant out of livery follows her at a distance of ten yards. She displays no gaudy colors, no open-worked stockings, no over-elaborate waist-buckle, no embroidered frills to her drawers fussing round her ankles. You will see that she is shod with prunella shoes, with sandals crossed over extremely fine cotton stockings, or plain gray silk stockings; or perhaps she wears boots of the most exquisite simplicity. You notice that her gown is made of a neat and inexpensive material, but made in a way that surprises more than one woman of the middle class; it is almost always a long pelisse, with bows to fasten it, and neatly bound with fine cord or an imperceptible braid. The Unknown has a way of her own in wrapping herself in her shawl or mantilla; she knows how to draw it round her from her hips to her neck, outlining a carapace, as it were, which would make an ordinary woman look like a turtle, but which in her sets off the most beautiful forms while concealing them. How does she do it? This secret she keeps, though unguarded by any patent.

"As she walks she gives herself a little concentric and harmonious twist, which makes her supple or dangerous slenderness writhe under the stuff, as a snake does under the green gauze of trembling grass. Is it to an angel or a devil that she owes the graceful undulation which plays under her long black silk cape, stirs its lace frill, sheds an airy balm, and what I should like to call the breeze of a Parisienne? You may recognize over her arms, round her waist, about her throat, a science of drapery recalling the antique Mnemosyne.

"Oh! how thoroughly she understands the *cut* of her gait —forgive the expression. Study the way she puts her foot forward, molding her skirt with such a decent preciseness that the passer-by is filled with admiration, mingled with

desire, but subdued by deep respect. When an Englishwoman attempts this step, she looks like a grenadier marching forward to attack a redoubt. The women of Paris have a genius for walking. The municipality really owed them asphalt foot-walks.

"Our Unknown jostles no one. If she wants to pass, she waits with proud humility till some one makes way. The distinction peculiar to a well-bred woman betrays itself, especially in the way she holds her shawl or cloak crossed over her bosom. Even as she walks she has a little air of serene dignity, like Rafael's Madonnas in their frames. Her aspect, at once quiet and disdainful, makes the most insolent dandy step aside for her.

"Her bonnet, remarkable for its simplicity, is trimmed with crisp ribbons; there may be flowers in it, but the cleverest of such women wear only bows. Feathers demand a carriage; flowers are too showy. Beneath it you see the fresh unworn face of a woman who, without conceit, is sure of herself; who looks at nothing, and sees everything; whose vanity, satiated by being constantly gratified, stamps her face with an indifference which piques your curiosity. She knows that she is looked at, she knows that everybody, even women, turn round to see her again. And she threads her way through Paris like a gossamer, spotless and pure.

"This delightful species affects the hottest latitudes, the cleanest longitudes of Paris; you will meet her between the 10th and 110th Arcade of the Rue de Rivoli; along the line of the Boulevards from the equator of the Passage des Panoramas, where the products of India flourish, where the warmest creations of industry are displayed, to the Cape of the Madeleine; in the least muddy districts of the citizen quarters, between No. 30 and No. 130 of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. During the winter, she haunts the terrace of the Feuillants, but not the asphalt pavement that lies parallel. According to the weather, she may be seen flying in the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées, which is bounded on the east by the Place Louis XV., on the west

by the Avenue de Marigny, to the south by the road, to the north by the gardens of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Never is this pretty variety of woman to be seen in the hyperborean regions of the Rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtschatka of miry, narrow, commercial streets; never anywhere in bad weather. These flowers of Paris, blooming only in Oriental weather, perfume the highways; and after five o'clock fold up like morning-glory flowers. The women you will see later, looking a little like them, trying to ape them, are would-be ladies; while the fair Unknown, your Beatrice of a day, is a 'perfect lady.'

"It is not very easy for a foreigner, my dear Count, to recognize the differences by which the observer *emeritus* distinguishes them—women are such consummate actresses; but they are glaring in the eyes of Parisians: hooks ill fastened, strings showing loops of rusty-white tape through a gaping slit in the back, rubbed shoe-leather, ironed bonnet-strings, an over-full skirt, an over-tight waist. You will see a certain effort in the intentional droop of the eyelid. There is something conventional in the attitude.

"As to the bourgeoise, the citizen womankind, she cannot possibly be mistaken for the lady; she is an admirable foil to her, she accounts for the spell cast over you by the Unknown. She is bustling, and goes out in all weathers, trots about, comes, goes, gazes, does not know whether she will or will not go into a shop. Where the lady knows just what she wants and what she is doing, the townswoman is undecided, tucks up her skirts to cross a gutter, dragging a child by the hand, which compels her to look out for the vehicles; she is a mother in public, and talks to her daughter; she carries money in her bag, and has open-work stockings on her feet; in winter, she wears a boa over her fur cloak; in summer, a shawl and a scarf; she is accomplished in the redundances of dress.

"You will meet the fair Unknown again at the Italiens, at the Opera, at a ball. She will then appear under such a different aspect that you would think them two beings devoid

of any analogy. The woman has emerged from those mysterious garments like a butterfly from its silky cocoon. She serves up, like some rare dainty, to your ravished eyes, the forms which her bodice scarcely revealed in the morning. At the theatre she never mounts higher than the second tier, excepting at the Italiens. You can there watch at your leisure the studied deliberateness of her movements. The enchanting deceiver plays off all the little political artifices of her sex so naturally as to exclude all idea of art or premeditation. If she has a royally beautiful hand, the most perspicacious beholder will believe that it is absolutely necessary that she should twist, or refix, or push aside the ringlet or curl she plays with. If she has some dignity of profile, you will be persuaded that she is giving irony or grace to what she says to her neighbor, sitting in such a position as to produce the magical effect of the 'lost profile,' so dear to great painters, by which the cheek catches the high light, the nose is shown in clear outline, the nostrils are transparently rosy, the forehead squarely modelled, the eye has its spangle of fire, but fixed on space, and the white roundness of the chin is accentuated by a line of light. If she has a pretty foot, she will throw herself on a sofa with the coquettish grace of a cat in the sunshine, her feet outstretched without your feeling that her attitude is anything but the most charming model ever given to a sculptor by lassitude.

"Only the perfect lady is quite at her ease in full dress; nothing inconveniences her. You will never see her, like the woman of the citizen class, pulling up a refractory shoulder-strap, or pushing down a rebellious whalebone, or looking whether her tucker is doing its office of faithful guardian to two treasures of dazzling whiteness, or glancing in the mirrors to see if her head-dress is keeping its place. Her toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time to study herself, to learn what becomes her, for she has long known what does not suit her. You will not find her as you go out; she vanishes before the end of the play. If by chance she is to be seen, calm and stately, on the stairs,

she is experiencing some violent emotion; she has to bestow a glance, to receive a promise. Perhaps she goes down so slowly on purpose to gratify the vanity of a slave whom she sometimes obeys. If your meeting takes place at a ball or an evening party, you will gather the honey, natural or affected, of her insinuating voice; her empty words will enchant you, and she will know how to give them the value of thought by her inimitable bearing."

"To be such a woman, is it not necessary to be very clever?" asked the Polish Count.

"It is necessary to have great taste," replied the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And in France taste is more than cleverness," said the Russian.

"This woman's cleverness is the triumph of a purely plastic art," Blondet went on. "You will not know what she said, but you will be fascinated. She will toss her head, or gently shrug her white shoulders; she will gild an insignificant speech with a charming pout and smile; or throw a Voltairean epigram into an 'Indeed!' an 'Ah!' a 'What then!' A jerk of her head will be her most pertinent form of questioning; she will give meaning to the movement by which she twirls a vinaigrette hanging to her finger by a ring. She gets an artificial grandeur out of superlative trivialities; she simply drops her hand impressively, letting it fall over the arm of her chair as dewdrops hang on the cup of a flower, and all is said—she has pronounced judgment beyond appeal, to the apprehension of the most obtuse. She knows how to listen to you; she gives you the opportunity of shining, and —I ask your modesty—those moments are rare?"

The candid simplicity of the young Pole, to whom Blondet spoke, made all the party shout with laughter.

"Now, you will not talk for half an hour with a bourgeoise without her alluding to her husband in one way or another," Blondet went on with unperturbed gravity; "whereas, even if you know that your lady is married, she will have the delicacy to conceal her husband so effectually

that it will need the enterprise of Christopher Columbus to discover him. Often you will fail in the attempt single-handed. If you have had no opportunity of inquiring, toward the end of the evening you detect her gazing fixedly at a middle-aged man wearing a decoration, who bows and goes out. She has ordered her carriage, and goes.

"You are not the rose, but you have been with the rose, and you go to bed under the golden canopy of a delicious dream, which will last perhaps after Sleep, with his heavy finger, has opened the ivory gates of the temple of dreams.

"The lady, when she is at home, sees no one before four; she is shrewd enough always to keep you waiting. In her house you will find everything in good taste; her luxury is for hourly use, and duly renewed; you will see nothing under glass shades, no rags of wrappings hanging about, and looking like a pantry. You will find the staircase warmed. Flowers on all sides will charm your sight—flowers, the only gift she accepts, and those only from certain people, for nosegays live but a day; they give pleasure, and must be replaced; to her they are, as in the East, a symbol and a promise. The costly toys of fashion lie about, but not so as to suggest a museum or a curiosity shop. You will find her sitting by the fire in a low chair, from which she will not rise to greet you. Her talk will not now be what it was at the ball; there she was our creditor; in her own home she owes you the pleasure of her wit. These are the shades of which the lady is a marvellous mistress. What she likes in you is a man to swell her circle, an object for the cares and attentions which such women are now happy to bestow. Therefore, to attract you to her drawing-room she will be bewitchingly charming. This especially is where you feel how isolated women are nowadays, and why they want a little world of their own, to which they may seem a constellation. Conversation is impossible without generalities."

"Yes," said de Marsay, "you have truly hit the fault of our age. The epigram—a volume in a word—no longer

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strikes, as it did in the eighteenth century, at persons or at things, but at squalid events, and it dies in a day."

"Hence," said Blondet, "the intelligence of the lady, if she has any, consists in casting doubts on everything, while the *bourgeoise* uses hers to affirm everything. Here lies the great difference between the two women; the townswoman is certainly virtuous; the lady does not know yet whether she is, or whether she always will be; she hesitates and struggles where the other refuses pointblank and falls full length. This hesitancy in everything is one of the last graces left to her by our horrible times. She rarely goes to church, but she will talk to you of religion; and if you have the good taste to affect Free-thought, she will try to convert you, for you will have opened a way for the stereotyped phrases, the head-shaking and gestures understood by all these women: 'For shame! I thought you had too much sense to attack religion. Society is tottering, and you deprive it of its support. Why, religion at this moment means you and me; it is property, and the future of our children! Ah! let us not be selfish! Individualism is the disease of the age, and religion is the only remedy; it unites families which your laws put asunder,' and so forth. Then she plunges into some neo-Christian speech sprinkled with political notions which is neither Catholic nor Protestant—but moral? Oh! deuced moral!—in which you may recognize a fag end of every material woven by modern doctrines, at loggerheads together."

The women could not help laughing at the airs by which Blondet illustrated his satire.

"This explanation, dear Count Adam," said Blondet, turning to the Pole, "will have proved to you that the 'perfect lady' represents the intellectual no less than the political muddle, just as she is surrounded by the showy and not very lasting products of an industry which is always aiming at destroying its work in order to replace it by something else. When you leave her you say to yourself: She certainly has superior ideas! And you believe it all the more

because she will have sounded your heart with a delicate touch, and have asked you your secrets; she affects ignorance, to learn everything; there are some things she never knows, not even when she knows them. You alone will be uneasy, you will know nothing of the state of her heart. The great ladies of old flaunted their love-affairs, with newspapers and advertisements; in these days the lady has her little passion neatly ruled like a sheet of music with its crotchets and quavers and minims, its rests, its pauses, its sharps to sign the key. A mere weak woman, she is anxious not to compromise her love, or her husband, or the future of her children. Name, position, and fortune are no longer flags so respected as to protect all kinds of merchandise on board. The whole aristocracy no longer advances in a body to screen the lady. She has not, like the great lady of the past, the demeanor of lofty antagonism; she can crush nothing underfoot, it is she who would be crushed. Thus she is apt at Jesuitical *mezzo termine*, she is a creature of equivocal compromises, of guarded proprieties, of anonymous passions steered between two reef-bound shores. She is as much afraid of her servants as an Englishwoman who lives in dread of a trial in the divorce-court. This woman —so free at a ball, so attractive out walking—is a slave at home; she is never independent but in perfect privacy, or theoretically. She must preserve herself in her position as a lady. This is her task.

"For in our day a woman repudiated by her husband, reduced to a meagre allowance, with no carriage, no luxury, no opera-box, none of the divine accessories of the toilet, is no longer a wife, a maid, or a townswoman; she is adrift, and becomes a chattel. The Carmelites will not receive a married woman; it would be bigamy. Would her lover still have anything to say to her? That is the question. Thus your perfect lady may perhaps give occasion to calumny, never to slander."

"It is all horribly true," said the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And so," said Blondet, "our 'perfect lady' lives

between English hypocrisy and the delightful frankness of the eighteenth century—a bastard system, symptomatic of an age in which nothing that grows up is at all like the thing that has vanished, in which transition leads nowhere, everything is a matter of degree; all the great figures shrink into the background, and distinction is purely personal. I am fully convinced that it is impossible for a woman, even if she were born close to a throne, to acquire before the age of five-and-twenty the encyclopedic knowledge of trifles, the practice of manœuvring, the important small things, the musical tones and harmony of coloring, the angelic bedevilments and innocent cunning, the speech and the silence, the seriousness and the banter, the wit and the obtuseness, the diplomacy and the ignorance which make up the perfect lady."

"And where, in accordance with the sketch you have drawn," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Emile Blondet, "would you class the female author? Is she a perfect lady, a woman *comme il faut?*"

"When she has no genius, she is a woman *comme il n'en faut pas*," Blondet replied, emphasizing the words with a stolen glance, which might make them seem praise frankly addressed to Camille Maupin. "This epigram is not mine, but Napoleon's," he added.

"You need not owe Napoleon any grudge on that score," said Canalis, with an emphatic tone and gesture. "It was one of his weaknesses to be jealous of literary genius—for he had his mean points. Who will ever explain, depict, or understand Napoleon? A man represented with his arms folded, and who did everything, who was the greatest force ever known, the most concentrated, the most mordant, the most acid of all forces; a singular genius who carried armed civilization in every direction without fixing it anywhere; a man who could do everything because he willed everything; a prodigious phenomenon of will, conquering an illness by a battle, and yet doomed to die of disease in bed after living in the midst of ball and bullets; a man with a code and a

sword in his brain, word and deed; a clear-sighted spirit that foresaw everything but his own fall; a capricious politician who risked men by handfuls out of economy, and who spared three heads—those of Talleyrand, of Pozzo di Borgo, and of Metternich, diplomatists whose death would have saved the French Empire, and who seemed to him of greater weight than thousands of soldiers; a man to whom nature, as a rare privilege, had given a heart in a frame of bronze; mirthful and kind at midnight amid women, and next morning manipulating Europe as a young girl might amuse herself by splashing the water in her bath! Hypocritical and generous; loving tawdriness and simplicity; devoid of taste, but protecting the arts; and, in spite of these antitheses, really great in everything by instinct or by temperament; Cæsar at five-and-twenty, Cromwell at thirty; and then, like my grocer buried in Père Lachaise, a good husband and a good father. In short, he improvised public works, empires, kings, codes, verses, a romance—and all with more range than precision. Did he not aim at making all Europe France? And after making us weigh on the earth in such a way as to change the laws of gravitation, he left us poorer than on the day when he first laid hands on us; while he, who had taken an empire by his name, lost his name on the frontier of his empire in a sea of blood and soldiers. A man all thought and all action, who comprehended Desaix and Fouché."

"All despotism and all justice at the right moments. The true king!" said de Marsay.

"Ah! vat a pleashre it is to dichest vile you talk," said Baron de Nucingen.

"But do you suppose that the treat we are giving you is a common one?" asked Joseph Bridau. "If you had to pay for the charms of conversation as you do for those of dancing or of music, your fortune would be inadequate! There is no second performance of the same flash of wit."

"And are we really so much deteriorated as these gentlemen think?" said the Princesse de Cadignan, addressing the

women with a smile at once sceptical and ironical. "Because, in these days, under a régime which makes everything small, you prefer small dishes, small rooms, small pictures, small articles, small newspapers, small books, does that prove that women too have grown smaller? Why should the human heart change because you change your coat? In all ages the passions will remain the same. I know cases of beautiful devotion, of sublime sufferings, which lack the publicity—the glory, if you choose—which formerly gave lustre to the errors of some women. But though one may not have saved a King of France, one is not the less an Agnes Sorel. Do you believe that our dear Marquise d'Espard is not the peer of Madame Doublet, or Madame du Deffant, in whose rooms so much evil was spoken and done? Is not Taglioni a match for Camargo? or Malibran the equal of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If at this moment, through the fault of the Grocers who govern us, we have not a style of our own, had not the Empire its distinguishing stamp as the age of Louis XV. had, and was not its splendor fabulous? Have the sciences lost anything?"

"I am quite of your opinion, Madame; the women of this age are truly great," replied the Comte de Vandenesse. "When posterity shall have followed us, will not Madame Récamier appear in proportions as fine as those of the most beautiful women of the past? We have made so much history that historians will be lacking! The age of Louis XIV. had but one Madame de Sévigné; we have a thousand now in Paris who certainly write better than she did, and who do not publish their letters. Whether the Frenchwoman be called 'perfect lady' or great lady, she will always be *the* woman among women.

"Emile Blondet has given us a picture of the fascinations of a woman of the day; but, at need, this creature who bridles or shows off, who chirps out the ideas of Mr. This and Mr. That, would be heroic. And it must be said, your faults, Mesdames, are all the more poetical, because they

must always and under all circumstances be surrounded by greater perils. I have seen much of the world, I have studied it perhaps too late; but in cases where the illegality of your feelings might be excused, I have always observed the effects of I know not what chance—which you may call Providence—inevitably overwhelming such as we consider light women."

"I hope," said Madame de Vandenesse, "that we can be great in other ways—"

"Oh, let the Comte de Vandenesse preach to us!" exclaimed Madame de Sérizy.

"With all the more reason because he has preached a great deal by example," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"On my honor!" said General de Montriveau, "in all the dramas—a word you are very fond of," he said, looking at Blondet—"in which the finger of God has been visible, the most frightful I ever knew was very near being by my act—"

"Well, tell us all about it!" cried Lady Barimore; "I love to shudder!"

"It is the taste of a virtuous woman," replied de Marsay, looking at Lord Dudley's lovely daughter.

"During the campaign of 1812," General de Montriveau began, "I was the involuntary cause of a terrible disaster which may be of use to you, Doctor Bianchon," he said, turning to me, "since, while devoting yourself to the human body, you concern yourself a good deal with the mind; it may tend to solve some of the problems of the will.

"I was going through my second campaign; I enjoyed danger, and laughed at everything, like the young and foolish lieutenant of artillery that I was. When we reached the Beresina, the army had, as you know, lost all discipline, and had forgotten military obedience. It was a medley of men of all nations, instinctively making their way from north to south. The soldiers would drive a general in rags and barefoot away from their fire if he brought neither wood nor victuals. After the passage of

this famous river disorder did not diminish. I had come quietly and alone, without food, out of the marshes of Zembin, and was wandering in search of a house where I might be taken in. Finding none, or driven away from those I came across, happily toward evening I perceived a wretched little Polish farm, of which nothing can give you any idea unless you have seen the wooden houses of Lower Normandy, or the poorest farm-buildings of la Beauce. These dwellings consist of a single room, with one end divided off by a wooden partition, the smaller division serving as a storeroom for forage.

"In the darkness of twilight I could just see a faint smoke rising above this house. Hoping to find there some comrades more compassionate than those I had hitherto addressed, I boldly walked as far as the farm. On going in, I found the table laid. Several officers, and with them a woman—a common sight enough—were eating potatoes, some horseflesh broiled over the charcoal, and some frozen beetroots. I recognized among the company two or three artillery captains of the regiment in which I had first served. I was welcomed with a shout of acclamation, which would have amazed me greatly on the other side of the Beresina; but at this moment the cold was less intense; my fellow-officers were resting, they were warm, they had food, and the room, strewn with trusses of straw, gave the promise of a delightful night. We did not ask for so much in those days. My comrades could be philanthropists gratis—one of the commonest ways of being philanthropic. I sat down to eat on one of the bundles of straw.

"At the end of the table, by the side of the door opening into the smaller room full of straw and hay, sat my old colonel, one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw among all the mixed collection of men it has been my lot to meet. He was an Italian. Now, whenever human nature is truly fine in the lands of the south, it is really sublime. I do not know whether you have ever observed

the extreme fairness of Italians when they are fair. It is exquisite, especially under an artificial light. When I read the fantastical portrait of Colonel Oudet sketched by Charles Nodier, I found my own sensations in every one of his elegant phrases. Italian, then, as were most of the officers of his regiment, which had, in fact, been borrowed by the Emperor from Eugène's army, my colonel was a tall man, at least eight or nine inches above the standard, and admirably proportioned—a little stout perhaps, but prodigiously powerful, active, and clean-limbed as a greyhound. His black hair in abundant curls showed up his complexion, as white as a woman's; he had small hands, a shapely foot, a pleasant mouth, and an aquiline nose delicately formed, of which the tip used to become naturally pinched and white whenever he was angry, as happened often. His irascibility was so far beyond belief that I will tell you nothing about it; you will have the opportunity of judging of it. No one could be calm in his presence. I alone, perhaps, was not afraid of him; he had indeed taken such a singular fancy to me that he thought everything I did right. When he was in a rage his brow was knit and the muscles of the middle of his forehead set in a delta, or, to be more explicit, in Redgauntlet's horseshoe. This mark was, perhaps, even more terrifying than the magnetic flashes of his blue eyes. His whole frame quivered, and his strength, great as it was in his normal state, became almost unbounded.

"He spoke with a strong guttural roll. His voice, at least as powerful as that of Charles Nodier's Oudet, threw an incredible fulness of tone into the syllable or the consonant in which this burr was sounded. Though this faulty pronunciation was at times a grace, when commanding his men, or when he was excited, you cannot imagine, unless you had heard it, what force was expressed by this accent, which at Paris is so common. When the Colonel was quiescent, his blue eyes were angelically sweet, and his smooth brow had a most charming expression. On parade, or with the army of Italy, not a man could compare with him. In-

deed, d'Orsay himself, the handsome d'Orsay, was eclipsed by our Colonel on the occasion of the last review held by Napoleon before the invasion of Russia.

"Everything was in contrasts in this exceptional man. Passion lives on contrast. Hence you need not ask whether he exerted over women the irresistible influences to which our nature yields"—and the general looked at the Princesse de Cadignan—"as vitreous matter is molded under the pipe of the glassblower; still, by a singular fatality—an observer might perhaps explain the phenomena—the Colonel was not a lady-killer, or was indifferent to such successes.

"To give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in a few words what I once saw him do in a paroxysm of fury. We were dragging our guns up a very narrow road, bordered by a somewhat high slope on one side, and by thickets on the other. When we were half-way up we met another regiment of artillery, its colonel marching at the head. This colonel wanted to make the captain who was at the head of our foremost battery back down again. The captain, of course, refused; but the colonel of the other regiment signed to his foremost battery to advance, and in spite of the care the driver took to keep among the scrub, the wheel of the first gun struck our captain's right leg and broke it, throwing him over on the near side of his horse. All this was the work of a moment. Our Colonel, who was but a little way off, guessed that there was a quarrel; he galloped up, riding among the guns at the risk of falling with his horse's four feet in the air, and reached the spot, face to face with the other colonel, at the very moment when the captain fell, calling out 'Help!' No, our Italian Colonel was no longer human! Foam like the froth of champagne rose to his lips; he roared inarticulately like a lion. Incapable of uttering a word, or even a cry, he made a terrific signal to his antagonist, pointing to the wood and drawing his sword. The two colonels went aside. In two seconds we saw our Colonel's opponent stretched on the ground, his skull split in two.

The soldiers of his regiment backed—yes, by heaven, and pretty quickly too!

"The captain, who had been so nearly crushed, and who lay yelping in the puddle where the gun carriage had thrown him, had an Italian wife, a beautiful Sicilian of Messina, who was not indifferent to our Colonel. This circumstance had aggravated his rage. He was pledged to protect the husband, bound to defend him as he would have defended the woman herself.

"Now, in the hovel beyond Zembin, where I was so well received, this captain was sitting opposite to me, and his wife was at the other end of the table, facing the Colonel. This Sicilian was a little woman named Rosina, very dark, but with all the fire of the Southern sun in her black almond-shaped eyes. At this moment she was deplorably thin; her face was covered with dust, like fruit exposed to the drought of a highroad. Scarcely clothed in rags, exhausted by marches, her hair in disorder, and clinging together under a piece of a shawl tied close over her head, still she had the graces of a woman; her movements were engaging, her small rosy mouth and white teeth, the outline of her features and figure, charms which misery, cold, and neglect had not altogether defaced, still suggested love to any man who could think of a woman. Rosina had one of those frames which are fragile in appearance, but wiry and full of spring. Her husband, a gentleman of Piedmont, had a face expressive of ironical simplicity, if it is allowable to ally the two words. Brave and well informed, he seemed to know nothing of the connection which had subsisted between his wife and the Colonel for three years past. I ascribed this unconcern to Italian manners, or to some domestic secret; yet there was in the man's countenance one feature which always filled me with involuntary distrust. His under lip, which was thin and very restless, turned down at the corners instead of turning up, and this, as I thought, betrayed a streak of cruelty in a character which seemed so phlegmatic and indolent.

"As you may suppose, the conversation was not very sparkling when I went in. My weary comrades ate in silence; of course, they asked me some questions, and we related our misadventures, mingled with reflections on the campaign, the generals, their mistakes, the Russians, and the cold. A minute after my arrival the Colonel, having finished his meagre meal, wiped his mustache, bid us good-night, shot a black look at the Italian woman, saying, 'Rosina?' and then, without waiting for a reply, went into the little barn full of hay, to bed. The meaning of the Colonel's utterance was self-evident. The young wife replied by an indescribable gesture, expressing all the annoyance she could not but feel at seeing her thraldom thus flaunted without human decency, and the offence to her dignity as a woman, and to her husband. But there was, too, in the rigid setting of her features and the tight knitting of her brows a sort of presentiment; perhaps she foresaw her fate. Rosina remained quietly in her place.

"A minute later, and apparently when the Colonel was snug in his couch of straw or hay, he repeated, 'Rosina?'

"The tone of this second call was even more brutally questioning than the first. The Colonel's strong burr, and the length which the Italian language allows to be given to vowels and the final syllable, concentrated all the man's despotism, impatience, and strength of will. Rosina turned pale, but she rose, passed behind us, and went to the Colonel.

"All the party sat in utter silence; I, unluckily, after looking at them all, began to laugh, and then they all laughed too.—'*Tu ridi?*—you laugh?' said the husband.

" 'On my honor, old comrade,' said I, becoming serious again, 'I confess that I was wrong; I ask your pardon a thousand times, and if you are not satisfied by my apologies I am ready to give you satisfaction.'

" 'Oh! it is not you who are wrong, it is I!' he replied coldly.

"Thereupon we all lay down in the room, and before long all were sound asleep.

"Next morning each one, without rousing his neighbor or seeking companionship, set out again on his way, with that selfishness which made our rout one of the most horrible dramas of self-seeking, melancholy, and horror which ever was enacted under heaven. Nevertheless, at about seven or eight hundred paces from our shelter, we, most of us, met again and walked on together, like geese led in flocks by a child's wilful tyranny. The same necessity urged us all.

"Having reached a knoll whence we could still see the farmhouse where we had spent the night, we heard sounds resembling the roar of lions in the desert, the bellowing of bulls—no, it was a noise which can be compared to no known cry. And yet, mingling with this horrible and ominous roar, we could hear a woman's feeble scream. We all looked round, seized by I know not what impulse of terror; we no longer saw the house, but a huge bonfire. The farmhouse had been barricaded, and was in flames. Swirls of smoke borne on the wind brought us hoarse cries and an indescribable pungent smell. A few yards behind, the captain was quietly approaching to join our caravan; we gazed at him in silence, for no one dared question him; but he, understanding our curiosity, pointed to his breast with the forefinger of his right hand, and, waving the left in the direction of the fire, he said, '*Son'io.*'

"We all walked on without saying a word to him."

"There is nothing more terrible than the revolt of a sheep," said de Marsay.

"It would be frightful to let us leave with this horrible picture in our memory," said Madame de Montcornet. "I shall dream of it—"

"And what was the punishment of Monsieur de Marsay's 'First'?" said Lord Dudley, smiling.

"When the English are in jest, their foils have the buttons on," said Blondet.

"Monsieur Bianchon can tell us, for he saw her dying," replied de Marsay, turning to me.

"Yes," said I; "and her end was one of the most beau-

tiful I ever saw. The Duke and I had spent the night by the dying woman's pillow; pulmonary consumption, in the last stage, left no hope; she had taken the sacrament the day before. The Duke had fallen asleep. The Duchess, waking at about four in the morning, signed to me in the most touching way, with a friendly smile, to bid me leave him to rest, and she meanwhile was about to die. She had become incredibly thin, but her face had preserved its really sublime outline and features. Her pallor made her skin look like porcelain with a light within. Her bright eyes and color contrasted with this languidly elegant complexion, and her countenance was full of impressive calm. She seemed to pity the Duke, and the feeling had its origin in a lofty tenderness which, as death approached, seemed to know no bounds. The silence was absolute. The room, softly lighted by a lamp, looked like every sick-room at the hour of death.

"At this moment the clock struck. The Duke awoke, and was in despair at having fallen asleep. I did not see the gesture of impatience by which he manifested the regret he felt at having lost sight of his wife for a few of the last minutes vouchsafed to him; but it is quite certain that any one but the dying woman might have misunderstood it. A busy statesman, always thinking of the interests of France, the Duke had a thousand odd ways on the surface, such as often lead to a man of genius being mistaken for a madman, and of which the explanation lies in the exquisiteness and exacting needs of their intellect. He came to seat himself in an armchair by his wife's side, and looked fixedly at her. The dying woman put her hand out a little way, took her husband's and clasped it feebly; and in a low but agitated voice she said, 'My poor dear, who is left to understand you now?' Then she died, looking at him."

"The stories the doctor tells us," said the Comte de Vandenesse, "always leave a deep impression."

"But a sweet one," said Mademoiselle des Touches, rising.

PARIS, *June, 1839–42.*

LA GRANDE BRETECHE

(*Sequel to "Another Study of Woman"*)

"*AH! MADAME,*" replied the doctor, "I have some appalling stories in my collection. But each one has its proper hour in a conversation—you know the pretty jest recorded by Chamfort, and said to the Duc de Fronsac: 'Between your sally and the present moment lie ten bottles of champagne.' "

"But it is two in the morning, and the story of Rosina has prepared us," said the mistress of the house.

"Tell us, Monsieur Bianchon!" was the cry on every side.

The obliging doctor bowed, and silence reigned.

"At about a hundred paces from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loire," said he, "stands an old brown house, crowned with very high roofs, and so completely isolated that there is nothing near it, not even a fetid tannery or squalid tavern, such as are commonly seen outside small towns. In front of this house is a garden down to the river, where the box shrubs, formerly clipped close to edge the walks, now straggle at their own will. A few willows, rooted in the stream, have grown up quickly like an inclosing fence, and half hide the house. The wild plants we call weeds have clothed the bank with their beautiful luxuriance. The fruit-trees, neglected for these ten years past, no longer bear a crop, and their suckers have formed a thicket. The espaliers are like a copse. The paths, once gravelled, are overgrown with purslane; but, to be accurate, there is no trace of a path.

"Looking down from the hilltop, to which cling the ruins

of the old castle of the Dukes of Vendôme, the only spot whence the eye can see into this inclosure, we think that at a time, difficult now to determine, this spot of earth must have been the joy of some country gentleman devoted to roses and tulips, in a word, to horticulture, but above all a lover of choice fruit. An arbor is visible, or rather the wreck of an arbor, and under it a table still stands not entirely destroyed by time. At the aspect of this garden that is no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces may be divined as we divine the history of a worthy tradesman when we read the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the mournful and tender impressions which seize the soul, on one of the walls there is a sundial graced with this homely Christian motto, 'Ultimam cogita.'

"The roof of this house is dreadfully dilapidated, the outside shutters are always closed; the balconies are hung with swallows' nests; the doors are forever shut. Straggling grasses have outlined the flagstones of the steps with green; the ironwork is rusty. Moon and sun, winter, summer, and snow have eaten into the wood, warped the boards, peeled off the paint. The dreary silence is broken only by birds and cats, pole-cats, rats, and mice, free to scamper round, and fight, and eat each other. An invisible hand has written over it all: 'Mystery.'

"If, prompted by curiosity, you go to look at this house from the street, you will see a large gate, with a round-arched top; the children have made many holes in it. I learned later that this door had been blocked for ten years. Through these irregular breaches you will see that the side toward the courtyard is in perfect harmony with the side toward the garden. The same ruin prevails. Tufts of weeds outline the paving stones; the walls are scored by enormous cracks, and the blackened coping is laced with a thousand festoons of pellitory. The stone steps are disjointed; the bell-cord is rotten; the gutter-spouts broken. What fire from heaven can have fallen there? By what decree has salt been sown on this dwelling? Has God been mocked here? Or was

France betrayed?' These are the questions we ask ourselves. Reptiles crawl over it, but give no reply. This empty and deserted house is a vast enigma of which the answer is known to none.

"It was formerly a little domain, held in fief, and is known as La Grande Bretêche. During my stay at Vendôme, where Despleins had left me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling became one of my keenest pleasures. Was it not far better than a ruin? Certain memories of indisputable authenticity attach themselves to a ruin; but this house, still standing, though being slowly destroyed by an avenging hand, contained a secret, an unrevealed thought. At the very least it testified to a caprice. More than once in the evening I boarded the hedge, run wild, which surrounded the inclosure. I braved scratches, I got into this ownerless garden, this plot which was no longer public or private; I lingered there for hours gazing at the disorder. I would not, as the price of the story to which this strange scene no doubt was due, have asked a single question of any gossiping native. On that spot I wove delightful romances, and abandoned myself to little debauches of melancholy which enchanted me. If I had known the reason—perhaps quite commonplace—of this neglect, I should have lost the unwritten poetry which intoxicated me. To me this refuge represented the most various phases of human life, shadowed by misfortune; sometimes the calm of a cloister without the monks; sometimes the peace of the graveyard without the dead, who speak in the language of epitaphs; one day I saw in it the home of lepers; another, the house of the Atridæ; but, above all, I found there provincial life, with its contemplative ideas, its hour-glass existence. I often wept there, I never laughed.

"More than once I felt involuntary terrors as I heard overhead the dull hum of the wings of some hurrying wood-pigeon. The earth is dank; you must be on the watch for lizards, vipers, and frogs, wandering about with the wild freedom of nature; above all, you must have no fear of cold,

for in a few minutes you feel an icy cloak settle on your shoulders, like the Commendatore's hand on Don Giovanni's neck.

"One evening I felt a shudder; the wind had turned an old rusty weathercock, and the creaking sounded like a cry from the house, at the very moment when I was finishing a gloomy drama to account for this monumental embodiment of woe. I returned to my inn, lost in gloomy thoughts. When I had supped, the hostess came into my room with an air of mystery, and said, 'Monsieur, here is Monsieur Regnault.'

" 'Who is Monsieur Regnault?'

" 'What, sir, do not you know Monsieur Regnault?—Well, that's odd,' said she, leaving the room.

"On a sudden I saw a man appear, tall, slim, dressed in black, hat in hand, who came in like a ram ready to butt his opponent, showing a receding forehead, a small pointed head, and a colorless face of the hue of a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for an usher. The stranger wore an old coat, much worn at the seams; but he had a diamond in his shirt frill, and gold rings in his ears.

" 'Monsieur,' said I, 'whom have I the honor of addressing?'—He took a chair, placed himself in front of my fire, put his hat on my table, and answered while he rubbed his hands: 'Dear me, it is very cold.—Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.'

"I was encouraging myself by saying to myself, '*Il bondo cani!* Seek!'

" 'I am,' he went on, 'notary at Vendome.'

" 'I am delighted to hear it, Monsieur,' I exclaimed. 'But I am not in a position to make a will for reasons best known to myself.'

" 'One moment!' said he, holding up his hand as though to gain silence. 'Allow me, Monsieur, allow me! I am informed that you sometimes go to walk in the garden of la Grande Bretêche.'

" 'Yes, Monsieur.'

"'One moment!' said he, repeating his gesture. 'That constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, as executor under the will of the late Comtesse de Merret, I come in her name to beg you to discontinue the practice. One moment! I am not a Turk, and do not wish to make a crime of it. And besides, you are free to be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to leave the finest mansion in Vendome to fall into ruin. Nevertheless, Monsieur, you must be a man of education, and you should know that the laws forbid, under heavy penalties, any trespass on inclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But, the state in which the place is left may be an excuse for your curiosity. For my part, I should be quite content to make you free to come and go in the house; but being bound to respect the will of the testatrix, I have the honor, Monsieur, to beg that you will go into the garden no more. I myself, Monsieur, since the will was read, have never set foot in the house, which, as I had the honor of informing you, is part of the estate of the late Madame de Merret. We have done nothing there but verify the number of doors and windows to assess the taxes I have to pay annually out of the funds left for that purpose by the late Madame de Merret. Ah! my dear sir, her will made a great commotion in the town.'

"The good man paused to blow his nose. I respected his volubility, perfectly understanding that the administration of Madame de Merret's estate had been the most important event of his life, his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. As I was forced to bid farewell to my beautiful reveries and romances, I was to reject learning the truth on official authority.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'would it be indiscreet if I were to ask you the reasons for such eccentricity?'

"At these words an expression, which revealed all the pleasure which men feel who are accustomed to ride a hobby, overspread the lawyer's countenance. He pulled up the collar of his shirt with an air, took out his snuff-box, opened it, and offered me a pinch; on my refusing, he took a large

one. He was happy! A man who has no hobby does not know all the good to be got out of life. A hobby is the happy medium between a passion and a monomania. At this moment I understood the whole bearing of Sterne's charming passion, and had a perfect idea of the delight with which my uncle Toby, encouraged by Trim, bestrode his hobby-horse.

"'Monsieur,' said Monsieur Regnault, 'I was head clerk in Monsieur Roguin's office, in Paris. A first-rate house, which you may have heard mentioned? No! An unfortunate bankruptcy made it famous.—Not having money enough to purchase a practice in Paris at the price to which they were run up in 1816, I came here and bought my predecessor's business. I had relations in Vendome, among others, a wealthy aunt, who allowed me to marry her daughter.—Monsieur,' he went on after a little pause, 'three months after being licensed by the Keeper of the Seals, one evening, as I was going to bed—it was before my marriage—I was sent for by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to her Château of Merret. Her maid, a good girl, who is now a servant in this inn, was waiting at my door with the Countess's own carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to Paris to die two months before I came here. He came to a miserable end, flinging himself into every kind of dissipation. You understand?

"'On the day when he left, Madame la Comtesse had quitted la Grande Bretesche, having dismantled it. Some people even say that she had burned all the furniture, the hangings—in short, all the chattels and furniture whatever used in furnishing the premises now let by the said M.—(Dear! what am I saying? I beg your pardon, I thought I was dictating a lease.)—In short, that she burned everything in the meadow at Merret. Have you been to Merret, Monsieur?—No,' said he, answering himself. 'Ah, it is a very fine place.'

"'For about three months previously,' he went on, with a jerk of his head, 'the Count and Countess had lived in a

very eccentric way; they admitted no visitors; Madame lived on the ground floor, and Monsieur on the first floor. When the Countess was left alone, she was never seen excepting at church. Subsequently, at home, at the chateau, she refused to see the friends, whether gentlemen or ladies, who went to call on her. She was already very much altered when she left la Grande Breteche to go to Merret. That dear lady—I say dear lady, for it was she who gave me this diamond, but indeed I saw her but once—that kind lady was very ill; she had, no doubt, given up all hope, for she died without choosing to send for a doctor; indeed, many of our ladies fancied she was not quite right in her head. Well, sir, my curiosity was strangely excited by hearing that Madame de Merret had need of my services. Nor was I the only person who took an interest in the affair. That very night, though it was already late, all the town knew that I was going to Merret.

"'The waiting-woman replied but vaguely to the questions I asked her on the way; nevertheless, she told me that her mistress had received the Sacrament in the course of the day at the hands of the Curé of Merret, and seemed unlikely to live through the night. It was about eleven when I reached the chateau. I went up the great staircase. After crossing some large, lofty, dark rooms, diabolically cold and damp, I reached the state bedroom where the Countess lay. From the rumors that were current concerning this lady (Monsieur, I should never end if I were to repeat all the tales that were told about her), I had imagined her a coquette. Imagine, then, that I had great difficulty in seeing her in the great bed where she was lying. To be sure, to light this enormous room, with old-fashioned heavy cornices, and so thick with dust that merely to see it was enough to make you sneeze, she had only an old Argand lamp. Ah! but you have not been to Merret. Well, the bed is one of those old-world beds, with a high tester hung with flowered chintz. A small table stood by the bed, on which I saw an "Imitation of Christ," which, by the way, I

bought for my wife, as well as the lamp. There were also a deep armchair for her confidential maid, and two small chairs. There was no fire. That was all the furniture; not enough to fill ten lines in an inventory.

"'My dear sir, if you had seen, as I then saw, that vast room, papered and hung with brown, you would have felt yourself transported into a scene of a romance. It was icy, nay more, funereal,' and he lifted his hand with a theatrical gesture and paused.

"'By dint of seeking, as I approached the bed, at last I saw Madame de Merret, under the glimmer of the lamp, which fell on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and as narrow as two folded hands. The Countess had a lace cap showing abundant hair, but as white as linen thread. She was sitting up in bed, and seemed to keep upright with great difficulty. Her large black eyes, dimmed by fever, no doubt, and half-dead already, hardly moved under the bony arch of her eyebrows. —There,' he added, pointing to his own brow. 'Her forehead was clammy; her fleshless hands were like bones covered with soft skin; the veins and muscles were perfectly visible. She must have been very handsome; but at this moment I was startled into an indescribable emotion at the sight. Never, said those who wrapped her in her shroud, had any living creature been so emaciated and lived. In short, it was awful to behold! Sickness had so consumed that woman that she was no more than a phantom. Her lips, which were pale violet, seemed to me not to move when she spoke to me.

"'Though my profession has familiarized me with such spectacles, by calling me not infrequently to the bedside of the dying to record their last wishes, I confess that families in tears and the agonies I have seen were as nothing in comparison with this lonely and silent woman in her vast chateau. I heard not the least sound, I did not perceive the movement which the sufferer's breathing ought to have given to the sheets that covered her, and I stood motionless, absorbed in looking at her in a sort of stupor. In fancy I

am there still.—At last her large eyes moved; she tried to raise her right hand, but it fell back on the bed, and she uttered these words, which came like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice: "I have waited for you with the greatest impatience." A bright flush rose to her cheeks. It was a great effort to her to speak.

"'"Madame," I began. She signed to me to be silent. At that moment the old housekeeper rose and said in my ear, "Do not speak; Madame la Comtesse is not in a state to bear the slightest noise, and what you would say might agitate her."

"'I sat down. A few instants after, Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right hand, and slipped it, not without infinite difficulty, under the bolster; she then paused a moment. With a last effort she withdrew her hand; and when she brought out a sealed paper, drops of perspiration rolled from her brow. "I place my will in your hands—Oh! God! Oh!" and that was all. She clutched a crucifix that lay on the bed, lifted it hastily to her lips, and died.

"'The expression of her eyes still makes me shudder as I think of it. She must have suffered much! There was joy in her last glance, and it remained stamped on her dead eyes.

"'I brought away the will, and when it was opened I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She left the whole of her property to the hospital at Vendôme excepting a few legacies. But these were her instructions as relating to la Grande Bretêche: She ordered me to leave the place, for fifty years counting from the day of her death, in the state in which it might be at the time of her decease, forbidding any one, whoever he might be, to enter the apartments, prohibiting any repairs whatever, and even settling a salary to pay watchmen if it were needful to secure the absolute fulfilment of her intentions. At the expiration of that term, if the will of the testatrix has been duly carried out, the house is to become the property of my

heirs, for, as you know, a notary cannot take a bequest. Otherwise la Grande Bretêche reverts to the heirs-at-law, but on condition of fulfilling certain conditions set forth in a codicil to the will, which is not to be opened till the expiration of the said term of fifty years. The will has not been disputed, so—' And without finishing his sentence, the lanky notary looked at me with an air of triumph; I made him quite happy by offering him my congratulations.

"'Monsieur,' I said in conclusion, 'you have so vividly impressed me that I fancy I see the dying woman whiter than her sheets; her glittering eyes frighten me; I shall dream of her to-night.—But you must have formed some idea as to the instructions contained in that extraordinary will.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, with comical reticence, 'I never allow myself to criticise the conduct of a person who honors me with the gift of a diamond.'

"However, I soon loosened the tongue of the discreet notary of Vendôme, who communicated to me, not without long digressions, the opinions of the deep politicians of both sexes whose judgments are law in Vendôme. But these opinions were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I was near falling asleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic history. The notary's ponderous voice and monotonous accent, accustomed no doubt to listen to himself and to make himself listened to by his clients or fellow-townsmen, were too much for my curiosity. Happily, he soon went away.

"'Ah, ha, Monsieur,' said he on the stairs, 'a good many persons would be glad to live five-and-forty years longer; but—one moment!' and he laid the first finger of his right hand to his nostril with a cunning look, as much as to say, 'Mark my words!—To last as long as that—as long as that,' said he, 'you must not be past sixty now.'

"I closed my door, having been roused from my apathy by this last speech, which the notary thought very funny; then I sat down in my armchair, with my feet on the fire-

dogs. I had lost myself in a romance *à la* Radcliffe, constructed on the juridical base given me by Monsieur Regnault, when the door, opened by a woman's cautious hand, turned on the hinges. I saw my landlady come in, a buxom, florid dame, always good-humored, who had missed her calling in life. She was a Fleming, who ought to have seen the light in a picture by Teniers.

"'Well, Monsieur,' said she, 'Monsieur Regnault has no doubt been giving you his history of la Grande Bretêche?'

"'Yes, Madame Lepas.'

"'And what did he tell you?'

"I repeated in a few words the creepy and sinister story of Madame de Merret. At each sentence my hostess put her head forward, looking at me with an innkeeper's keen scrutiny, a happy compromise between the instinct of a police constable, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a dealer.

"'My good Madame Lepas,' said I, as I ended, 'you seem to know more about it. Heh? If not, why have you come up to me?'

"'On my word, as an honest woman—'

"'Do not swear; your eyes are big with a secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret; what sort of man was he?'

"'Monsieur de Merret—well, you see he was a man you never could see the top of, he was so tall! A very good gentleman, from Picardy, and who had, as we say, his head close to his cap. He paid for everything down, so as never to have difficulties with any one. He was hot-tempered, you see! All our ladies liked him very much.'

"'Because he was hot-tempered?' I asked her.

"'Well, maybe,' said she; 'and you may suppose, sir, that a man had to have something to show for a figure-head before he could marry Madame de Merret, who, without any reflection on others, was the handsomest and richest heiress in our parts. She had about twenty thousand francs a year. All the town was at the wedding; the bride was pretty and

sweet-looking, quite a gem of a woman. Oh, they were a handsome couple in their day!'

"'And were they happy together?'

"'Hm, hm! so-so—so far as can be guessed, for, as you may suppose, we of the common sort were not hail-fellow-well-met with them.—Madame de Merret was a kind woman and very pleasant, who had no doubt sometimes to put up with her husband's tantrums. But though he was rather haughty, we were fond of him. After all, it was his place to behave so. When a man is a born nobleman, you see—'

"'Still, there must have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to part so violently?'

"'I did not say there was any catastrophe, sir. I know nothing about it.'

"'Indeed. Well, now, I am sure you know everything.'

"'Well, sir, I will tell you the whole story.—When I saw Monsieur Regnault go up to see you, it struck me that he would speak to you about Madame de Merret as having to do with la Grande Bretêche. That put it into my head to ask your advice, sir, seeming to me that you are a man of good judgment and incapable of playing a poor woman like me false—for I never did any one a wrong, and yet I am tormented by my conscience. Up to now I have never dared to say a word to the people of these parts; they are all chatter-mags, with tongues like knives. And never till now, sir, have I had any traveller here who stayed so long in the inn as you have, and to whom I could tell the history of the fifteen thousand francs—'

"'My dear Madame Lepas, if there is anything in your story of a nature to compromise me,' I said, interrupting the flow of her words, 'I would not hear it for all the world.'

'You need have no fears,' said she; 'you will see.'

"Her eagerness made me suspect that I was not the only person to whom my worthy landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be sole possessor, but I listened.

"'Monsieur,' said she, 'when the Emperor sent the Spaniards here, prisoners of war and others, I was required to

lodge at the charge of the Government a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. Notwithstanding his parole, he had to show himself every day to the sub-prefect. He was a Spanish grandee—neither more nor less. He had a name in *os* and *dia*, something like Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name down in my books, and you may see it if you like. Ah! he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who are all ugly they say. He was not more than five feet two or three in height, but so well made; and he had little hands that he kept so beautifully! Ah! you should have seen them. He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for her toilet. He had thick, black hair, a flame in his eye, a somewhat coppery complexion, but which I admired all the same. He wore the finest linen I have ever seen, though I have had princesses to lodge here, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantés, Monsieur Descazes, and the King of Spain. He did not eat much, but he had such polite and amiable ways that it was impossible to owe him a grudge for that. Oh! I was very fond of him, though he did not say four words to me in a day, and it was impossible to have the least bit of talk with him; if he was spoken to, he did not answer; it is a way, a mania they all have, it would seem.

"'He read his breviary like a priest, and went to mass and all the services quite regularly. And where did he post himself?—we found this out later.—Within two yards of Madame de Merret's chapel. As he took that place the very first time he entered the church, no one imagined there was any purpose in it. Besides, he never raised his nose above his book, poor young man! And then, Monsieur, of an evening he went for a walk on the hill among the ruins of the old castle. It was his only amusement, poor man; it reminded him of his native land. They say that Spain is all hills!

"'One evening, a few days after he was sent here, he was out very late. I was rather uneasy when he did not come in till just on the stroke of midnight; but we all got used to his

whims; he took the key of the door, and we never sat up for him. He lived in a house belonging to us in the Rue des Casernes. Well, then, one of our stable-boys told us one evening that, going down to wash the horses in the river, he fancied he had seen the Spanish Grandee swimming some little way off, just like a fish. When he came in, I told him to be careful of the weeds, and he seemed put out at having been seen in the water.

"'At last, Monsieur, one day, or rather one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come back. By hunting through his things, I found a written paper in the drawer of his table, with fifty pieces of Spanish gold of the kind they call doubloons, worth about five thousand francs; and in a little sealed box ten thousand francs' worth of diamonds. The paper said that in case he should not return, he left us this money and these diamonds in trust to found masses to thank God for his escape and for his salvation.

"'At that time I still had my husband, who ran off in search of him. And this is the queer part of the story; he brought back the Spaniard's clothes, which he had found under a big stone on a sort of breakwater along the river bank, nearly opposite la Grande Bretêche. My husband went so early that no one saw him. After reading the letter, he burned the clothes, and, in obedience to Count Férédia's wish, we announced that he had escaped.

"'The sub-prefect set all the constabulary at his heels; but, pshaw! he was never caught. Lepas believed that the Spaniard had drowned himself. I, sir, have never thought so; I believe, on the contrary, that he had something to do with the business about Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix her mistress was so fond of that she had it buried with her was made of ebony and silver; now in the early days of his stay here Monsieur Férédia had one of ebony and silver which I never saw later.—And now, Monsieur, do not you say that I need have no remorse about the Spaniard's fifteen thousand francs? Are they not really and truly mine?'

"'Certainly.—But have you never tried to question Rosalie?' said I.

"'Oh, to be sure I have, sir. But what is to be done? That girl is like a wall. She knows something, but it is impossible to make her talk.'

"After chatting with me for a few minutes, my hostess left me a prey to vague and sinister thoughts, to romantic curiosity, and a religious dread, not unlike the deep emotion which comes upon us when we go into a dark church at night and discern a feeble light glimmering under a lofty vault—a dim figure glides across—the sweep of a gown or of a priest's cassock is audible—and we shiver! La Grande Bretêche, with its rank grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty iron-work, its locked doors, its deserted rooms, suddenly rose before me in fantastic vividness. I tried to get into the mysterious dwelling to search out the heart of this solemn story, this drama which had killed three persons.

"Rosalie became in my eyes the most interesting being in Vendôme. As I studied her, I detected signs of an inmost thought, in spite of the blooming health that glowed in her dimpled face. There was in her soul some element of ruth or of hope; her manner suggested a secret, like the expression of devout souls who pray in excess, or of a girl who has killed her child and forever hears its last cry. Nevertheless, she was simple and clumsy in her ways; her vacant smile had nothing criminal in it, and you would have pronounced her innocent only from seeing the large red and blue checked kerchief that covered her stalwart bust, tucked into the tight-laced square bodice of a lilac and white-striped gown. 'No,' said I to myself, 'I will not quit Vendôme without knowing the whole history of la Grande Bretêche. To achieve this end, I will make love to Rosalie if it proves necessary.'

"'Rosalie!' said I one evening.

"'Your servant, sir?'

"'You are not married?' She started a little.

"'Oh! there is no lack of men if ever I take a fancy to be

miserable!' she replied, laughing. She got over her agitation at once; for every woman, from the highest lady to the inn-servant inclusive, has a native presence of mind.

"'Yes; you are fresh and good-looking enough never to lack lovers! But tell me, Rosalie, why did you become an inn-servant on leaving Madame de Merret? Did she not leave you some little annuity?'

"'Oh yes, sir. But my place here is the best in all the town of Vendôme.'

"This reply was such a one as judges and attorneys call evasive. Rosalie, as it seemed to me, held in this romantic affair the place of the middle square of the chess-board; she was at the very centre of the interest and of the truth; she appeared to me to be tied into the knot of it. It was not a case for ordinary love-making; this girl contained the last chapter of a romance, and from that moment all my attentions were devoted to Rosalie. By dint of studying the girl, I observed in her, as in every woman whom we make our ruling thought, a variety of good qualities; she was clean and neat; she was handsome, I need not say; she soon was possessed of every charm that desire can lend to a woman in whatever rank of life. A fortnight after the notary's visit, one evening, or rather one morning, in the small hours, I said to Rosalie:

"'Come, tell me all you know about Madame de Merret.'

"'Oh!' she cried in terror, 'do not ask me that, Monsieur Horace!'

"Her handsome features clouded over, her bright coloring grew pale, and her eyes lost their artless, liquid brightness.

"'Well,' she said, 'I will tell you; but keep the secret carefully.'

"'All right, my child; I will keep all your secrets with a thief's honor, which is the most loyal known.'

"'If it is all the same to you,' said she, 'I would rather it should be with your own.'

"Thereupon she set her head-kerchief straight, and settled herself to tell the tale; for there is no doubt a particular at-

titude of confidence and security is necessary to the telling of a narrative. The best tales are told at a certain hour—just as we are all here at table. No one ever told a story well standing up, or fasting.

"If I were to reproduce exactly Rosalie's diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarcely contain it. Now, as the event of which she gave me a confused account stands exactly midway between the notary's gossip and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the middle term of a rule-of three sum stands between the first and third, I have only to relate it in as few words as may be. I shall therefore be brief.

"The room at la Grande Bretêche in which Madame de Merret slept was on the ground floor; a little cupboard in the wall, about four feet deep, served her to hang her dresses in. Three months before the evening of which I have to relate the events, Madame de Merret had been seriously ailing, so much so that her husband had left her to herself, and had his own bedroom on the first floor. By one of those accidents which it is impossible to foresee, he came in that evening two hours later than usual from the club, where he went to read the papers and talk politics with the residents in the neighborhood. His wife supposed him to have come in, to be in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a very animated discussion; the game of billiards had waxed vehement; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum at Vendôme, where everybody is thrifty, and where social habits are restrained within the bounds of a simplicity worthy of all praise, and the foundation perhaps of a form of true happiness which no Parisian would care for.

"For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been satisfied to ask Rosalie whether his wife was in bed; on the girl's replying always in the affirmative, he at once went to his own room, with the good faith that comes of habit and confidence. But this evening, on coming in, he took it into his head to go to see Madame de Merret, to tell her of his

ill-luck, and perhaps to find consolation. During dinner he had observed that his wife was very becomingly dressed; he reflected as he came home from the club that his wife was certainly much better, that convalescence had improved her beauty, discovering it, as husbands discover everything, a little too late. Instead of calling Rosalie, who was in the kitchen at the moment watching the cook and the coachman playing a puzzling hand at cards, Monsieur de Merret made his way to his wife's room by the light of his lantern, which he set down on the lowest step of the stairs. His step, easy to recognize, rang under the vaulted passage.

"At the instant when the gentleman turned the key to enter his wife's room, he fancied he heard the door shut of the closet of which I have spoken; but when he went in, Madame de Merret was alone, standing in front of the fireplace. The unsuspecting husband fancied that Rosalie was in the cupboard; nevertheless, a doubt, ringing in his ears like a peal of bells, put him on his guard; he looked at his wife, and read in her eyes an indescribably anxious and haunted expression.

"'You are very late,' said she.—Her voice, usually so clear and sweet, struck him as being slightly husky.

"Monsieur de Merret made no reply, for at this moment Rosalie came in. This was like a thunderclap. He walked up and down the room, going from one window to another at a regular pace, his arms folded.

"'Have you had bad news, or are you ill?' his wife asked him timidly, while Rosalie helped her to undress. He made no reply.

"'You can go, Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret to her maid; 'I can put in my curl-papers myself.'—She scented disaster at the mere aspect of her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him. As soon as Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she lingered a few minutes in the passage, Monsieur de Merret came and stood facing his wife, and said coldly, 'Madame, there is some

one in your cupboard!' She looked at her husband calmly, and replied quite simply, 'No, Monsieur.'

"This 'No' wrung Monsieur de Merret's heart; he did not believe it; and yet his wife had never appeared purer or more saintly than she seemed to be at this moment. He rose to go and open the closet door. Madame de Merret took his hand, stopped him, looked at him sadly, and said in a voice of strange emotion, 'Remember, if you should find no one there, everything must be at an end between you and me.'

"The extraordinary dignity of his wife's attitude filled him with deep esteem for her, and inspired him with one of those resolves which need only a grander stage to become immortal.

"'No, Josephine,' he said, 'I will not open it. In either event we should be parted forever. Listen; I know all the purity of your soul, I know you lead a saintly life, and would not commit a deadly sin to save your life.'—At these words Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard stare—'See, here is your crucifix,' he went on. 'Swear to me before God that there is no one in there; I will believe you—I will never open that door.'

"Madame de Merret took up the crucifix and said, 'I swear it.'

"'Louder,' said her husband; 'and repeat: "I swear before God that there is nobody in that closet."' She repeated the words without flinching.

"'That will do,' said Monsieur de Merret coldly. After a moment's silence: 'You have there a fine piece of work which I never saw before,' said he, examining the crucifix of ebony and silver very artistically wrought.

"'I found it at Duvivier's; last year when that troop of Spanish prisoners came through Vendome, he bought it of a Spanish monk.'

"'Indeed,' said Monsieur de Merret, hanging the crucifix on its nail; and he rang the bell.

"He had not to wait for Rosalie. Monsieur de Merret went forward quickly to meet her, led her into the bay of the window that looked on to the garden, and said to her in an undertone:

"'I know that Gorenflot wants to marry you, that poverty alone prevents your setting up house, and that you told him you would not be his wife till he found means to become a master mason.—Well, go and fetch him; tell him to come here with his trowel and tools. Contrive to wake no one in his house but himself. His reward will be beyond your wishes. Above all, go out without saying a word—or else!' and he frowned.

"Rosalie was going, and he called her back. 'Here, take my latch-key,' said he.

"'Jean!' Monsieur de Merret called in a voice of thunder down the passage. Jean, who was both coachman and confidential servant, left his cards and came.

"'Go to bed, all of you,' said his master, beckoning him to come close; and the gentleman added in a whisper, 'When they are all asleep—mind, *asleep*—you understand?—come down and tell me.'

"Monsieur de Merret, who had never lost sight of his wife while giving his orders, quietly came back to her at the fireside, and began to tell her the details of the game of billiards and the discussion at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret conversing amiably.

"Not long before this Monsieur de Merret had had new ceilings made to all the reception-rooms on the ground floor. Plaster is very scarce at Vendome; the price is enhanced by the cost of carriage; the gentleman had therefore had a considerable quantity delivered to him, knowing that he could always find purchasers for what might be left. It was this circumstance which suggested the plan he carried out.

"'Gorenflot is here, sir,' said Rosalie in a whisper.

"'Tell him to come in,' said her master aloud.

"Madame de Merret turned paler when she saw the mason.

" 'Gorenflot,' said her husband, 'go and fetch some bricks from the coach-house; bring enough to wall up the door of this cupboard; you can use the plaster that is left for cement.' Then, dragging Rosalie and the workman close to him—'Listen, Gorenflot,' said he, in a low voice, 'you are to sleep here to-night; but to-morrow morning you shall have a passport to take you abroad to a place I will tell you of. I will give you six thousand francs for your journey. You must live in that town for ten years; if you find you do not like it, you may settle in another, but it must be in the same country. Go through Paris and wait there till I join you. I will there give you an agreement for six thousand francs more, to be paid to you on your return, provided you have carried out the conditions of the bargain. For that price you are to keep perfect silence as to what you have to do this night. To you, Rosalie, I will secure ten thousand francs, which will not be paid to you till your wedding-day, and on condition of your marrying Gorenflot; but, to get married, you must hold your tongue. If not, no wedding gift!'

" 'Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret, 'come and brush my hair.'

"Her husband quietly walked up and down the room, keeping an eye on the door, on the mason, and on his wife, but without any insulting display of suspicion. Gorenflot could not help making some noise. Madame de Merret seized a moment when he was unloading some bricks, and when her husband was at the other end of the room, to say to Rosalie: 'My dear child, I will give you a thousand francs a year if only you will tell Gorenflot to leave a crack at the bottom.' Then she added aloud quite coolly: 'You had better help him.'

"Monsieur and Madame de Merret were silent all the time while Gorenflot was walling up the door. This silence was intentional on the husband's part; he did not wish to give his wife the opportunity of saying anything with a double meaning. On Madame de Merret's side it was pride

or prudence. When the wall was half built up the cunning mason took advantage of his master's back being turned to break one of the two panes in the top of the door with a blow of his pick. By this Madame de Merret understood that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. They all three then saw the face of a dark, gloomy-looking man, with black hair and flaming eyes.

"Before her husband turned round again the poor woman had nodded to the stranger, to whom the signal was meant to convey, 'Hope.'

"At four o'clock, as day was dawning, for it was the month of September, the work was done. The mason was placed in charge of Jean, and Monsieur de Merret slept in his wife's room.

"Next morning when he got up he said with apparent carelessness, 'Oh, by the way, I must go to the Mairie for the passport.' He put on his hat, took two or three steps toward the door, paused, and took the crucifix. His wife was trembling with joy.

" 'He will go to Duvivier's,' thought she.

"As soon as he had left, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie, and then in a terrible voice she cried: 'The pick! Bring the pick! and set to work. I saw how Gorenflot did it yesterday; we shall have time to make a gap and build it up again.'

"In an instant Rosalie had brought her mistress a sort of cleaver; she, with a vehemence of which no words can give an idea, set to work to demolish the wall. She had already got out a few bricks, when, turning to deal a stronger blow than before, she saw behind her Monsieur de Merret. She fainted away.

" 'Lay Madame on her bed,' said he coldly.

"Foreseeing what would certainly happen in his absence, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had merely written to the Maire and sent for Duvivier. The jeweller arrived just as the disorder in the room had been repaired.

" 'Duvivier,' asked Monsieur de Merret, 'did not you

buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through the town?'

"'No, Monsieur.'

"'Very good; thank you, said he, flashing a tiger's glare at his wife. 'Jean,' he added, turning to his confidential valet, 'you can serve my meals here in Madame de Merret's room. She is ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers.'

"The cruel man remained in his wife's room for twenty days. During the earlier time, when there was some little noise in the closet, and Josephine wanted to intercede for the dying man, he said, without allowing her to utter a word, 'You swore on the Cross that there was no one there.'"

After this story all the ladies rose from table, and thus the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. But there were some among them who had almost shivered at the last words.

PEACE IN THE HOUSE

Dedicated to my dear niece Valentine Surville

THE INCIDENT recorded in this sketch took place toward the end of the month of November, 1809, the moment when Napoleon's fugitive empire attained the apogee of its splendor. The trumpet-blasts of Wagram were still sounding an echo in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was being signed between France and the Coalition. Kings and princes came to perform their orbits, like stars, round Napoleon, who gave himself the pleasure of dragging all Europe in his train—a magnificent experiment in the power he afterward displayed at Dresden. Never, as contemporaries tell us, did Paris see entertainments more superb than those which preceded and followed the sovereign's marriage with an Austrian archduchess. Never, in the most splendid days of the Monarchy, had so many crowned heads thronged the shores of the Seine, never had the French aristocracy been so rich or so splendid. The diamonds lavishly scattered over the women's dresses, and the gold and silver embroidery on the uniforms contrasted so strongly with the penury of the Republic that the wealth of the globe seemed to be rolling through the drawing-rooms of Paris. Intoxication seemed to have turned the brains of this Empire of a day. All the military, not excepting their chief, revelled like parvenus in the treasure conquered for them by a million men with worsted epaulets, whose demands were satisfied by a few yards of red ribbon.

At this time most women affected that lightness of conduct and facility of morals which distinguished the reign of

Louis XV. Whether it were in imitation of the tone of the fallen monarchy, or because certain members of the Imperial family had set the example—as certain malcontents of the Faubourg Saint-Germain chose to say—it is certain that men and women alike flung themselves into a life of pleasure with an intrepidity which seemed to forebode the end of the world. But there was at that time another cause for such license. The infatuation of women for the military became a frenzy, and was too consonant to the Emperor's views for him to try to check it. The frequent calls to arms, which gave every treaty concluded between Napoleon and the rest of Europe the character of an armistice, left every passion open to a termination as sudden as the decisions of the Commander-in-chief of all these busbies, pelisses, and aigulets, which so fascinated the fair sex. Hearts were as nomadic as the regiments. Between the first and the fifth bulletin from the "Grande Armée" a woman might be in succession mistress, wife, mother, and widow.

Was it the prospect of early widowhood, the hope of a jointure, or that of bearing a name promised to history, which made the soldiers so attractive? Were women drawn to them by the certainty that the secret of their passions would be buried on the field of battle? or may we find the reason of this gentle fanaticism in the noble charm that courage has for a woman? Perhaps all these reasons, which the future historian of the manners of the Empire will no doubt amuse himself by weighing, counted for something in their facile readiness to abandon themselves to love intrigues. Be that as it may, it must here be confessed that at that time laurels hid many errors, women showed an ardent preference for the brave adventurers, whom they regarded as the true fount of honor, wealth, or pleasure; and in the eyes of young girls, an epaulet—the hieroglyphic of a future—signified happiness and liberty.

One feature, and a characteristic one, of this unique period in our history was an unbridled mania for everything glittering. Never were fireworks so much in vogue, never were

diamonds so highly prized. The men, as greedy as the women of these translucent pebbles, displayed them no less lavishly. Possibly the necessity for carrying plunder in the most portable form made gems the fashion in the army. A man was not ridiculous then, as he would be now, if his shirt-frill or his fingers blazed with large diamonds. Murat, an Oriental by nature, set the example of preposterous luxury to modern soldiers.

The Count de Gondreville, formerly known as Citizen Malin, whose elevation had made him famous, having become a Lucullus of the Conservative Senate, which "conserved" nothing, had postponed an entertainment in honor of the peace only that he might the better pay his court to Napoleon by his efforts to eclipse those flatterers who had been beforehand with him. The ambassadors from all the Powers friendly with France, with an eye to favors to come, the most important personages of the Empire, and even a few princes, were at this hour assembled in the wealthy senator's drawing-rooms. Dancing flagged; every one was watching for the Emperor, whose presence the Count had promised his guests. And Napoleon would have kept his word but for the scene which had broken out that very evening between him and Josephine—the scene which portended the impending divorce of the august pair. The report of this incident, at the time kept very secret, but recorded by history, did not reach the ears of the courtiers, and had no effect on the gayety of Comte de Gondreville's party beyond keeping Napoleon away.

The prettiest women in Paris, eager to be at the Count's on the strength of mere hearsay, at this moment were a besieging force of luxury, coquettishness, elegance, and beauty. The financial world, proud of its riches, challenged the splendor of the generals and high officials of the Empire, so recently gorged with orders, titles, and honors. These grand balls were always an opportunity seized upon by wealthy families for introducing their heiresses to Napoleon's Pretorian Guard, in the foolish hope of exchanging their splendid

fortunes for uncertain favors. The women who believed themselves strong enough in their beauty alone came to test their power. There, as elsewhere, amusement was but a blind. Calm and smiling faces and placid brows covered sordid interests, expressions of friendship were a lie, and more than one man was less distrustful of his enemies than of his friends.

These remarks are necessary to explain the incidents of the little imbroglio which is the subject of this study, and the picture, softened as it is, of the tone then dominant in Paris drawing-rooms.

"Turn your eyes a little toward the pedestal supporting that candelabrum—do you see a young lady with her hair drawn back *à la Chinoise!*—There, in the corner to the left; she has bluebells in the knot of chestnut curls which fall in clusters on her head. Do not you see her? She is so pale you might fancy she was ill, delicate-looking, and very small; there—now she is turning her head this way; her almond-shaped blue eyes, so delightfully soft, look as if they were made expressly for tears. Look, look! She is bending forward to see Madame de Vaudremont below the crowd of heads in constant motion; the high head-dresses prevent her having a clear view."

"I see her now, my dear fellow. You had only to say that she had the whitest skin of all the women here; I should have known whom you meant. I had noticed her before; she has the loveliest complexion I ever admired. From hence I defy you to see against her throat the pearls between the sapphires of her necklace. But she is a prude or a coquette, for the tucker of her bodice scarcely lets one suspect the beauty of her bust. What shoulders! what lily-whiteness!"

"Who is she?" asked the first speaker.

"Ah! that I do not know."

"Aristocrat!—Do you want to keep them all to yourself, Montcornet?"

"You of all men to banter me!" replied Montcornet, with

a smile. "Do you think you have a right to insult a poor general like me because, being a happy rival of Soulanges, you cannot even turn on your heel without alarming Madame de Vaudremont? Or is it because I came only a month ago into the Promised Land? How insolent you can be, you men in office, who sit glued to your chairs while we are dodging shot and shell! Come, Monsieur le Maître des Requêtes, allow us to glean in the field of which you can only have precarious possession from the moment when we evacuate it. The deuce is in it! We have all a right to live! My good friend, if you knew the German women, you would, I believe, do me a good turn with the Parisian you love best."

"Well, General, since you have vouchsafed to turn your attention to that lady, whom I never saw till now, have the charity to tell me if you have seen her dance."

"Why, my dear Martial, where have you dropped from? If you are ever sent with an embassy, I have small hopes of your success. Do not you see a triple rank of the most undaunted coquettes of Paris between her and the swarm of dancing men that buzz under the chandelier? And was it not only by the help of your eyeglass that you were able to discover her at all in the corner by that pillar, where she seems buried in the gloom, in spite of the candles blazing above her head? Between her and us there is such a sparkle of diamonds and glances, so many floating plumes, such a flutter of lace, of flowers and curls, that it would be a real miracle if any dancer could detect her among those stars. Why, Martial, how is it that you have not understood her to be the wife of some sous-préfet from Lippe or Dyle, who has come to try to get her husband promoted?"

"Oh, he will be!" exclaimed the Master of Appeals quickly.

"I doubt it," replied the Colonel of Cuirassiers, laughing. "She seems as raw in intrigue as you are in diplomacy. I dare bet, Martial, that you do not know how she got into that place."

The lawyer looked at the Colonel of Cuirassiers with an expression as much of contempt as of curiosity.

"Well," proceeded Montcornet, "she arrived, I have no doubt, punctually at nine, the first of the company perhaps, and probably she greatly embarrassed the Comtesse de Gondreville, who cannot put two ideas together. Repulsed by the mistress of the house, routed from chair to chair by each new-comer, and driven into the darkness of this little corner, she allowed herself to be walled in, the victim of the jealousy of the other ladies, who would gladly have buried that dangerous beauty. She had, of course, no friend to encourage her to maintain the place she first held in the front rank; then each of those treacherous fair ones would have enjoined on the men of her circle on no account to take out our poor friend, under pain of the severest punishment. That, my dear fellow, is the way in which those sweet faces, in appearance so tender and so artless, would have formed a coalition against the stranger, and that without a word beyond the question, 'Tell me, dear, do you know that little woman in blue?'—Look here, Martial, if you care to run the gantlet of more flattering glances and inviting questions than you will ever again meet in the whole of your life, just try to get through the triple rampart which defends that Queen of Dyle, or Lippe, or Charente. You will see whether the dullest woman of them all will not be equal to inventing some wile that would hinder the most determined man from bringing the plaintive stranger to the light. Does it not strike you that she looks like an elegy?"

"Do you think so, Montcornet? Then she must be a married woman?"

"Why not a widow?"

"She would be less passive," said the lawyer, laughing.

"She is perhaps the widow of a man who is gambling," replied the handsome Colonel.

"To be sure; since the peace there are so many widows of that class!" said Martial. "But, my dear Montcornet, we are a couple of simpletons. That face is still too ingenuous,

there is too much youth and freshness on the brow and temples for her to be married. What splendid flesh-tints! Nothing has sunk in the modelling of the nose. Lips, chin, everything in her face is as fresh as a white rosebud, though the expression is veiled, as it were, by the clouds of sadness. Who can it be that makes that young creature weep?"

"Women cry for so little," said the Colonel.

"I do not know," replied Martial; "but she does not cry because she is left there without a partner; her grief is not of to-day. It is evident that she has beautified herself for this evening with intention. I would wager that she is in love already."

"Bah! She is perhaps the daughter of some German princeling; no one talks to her," said Montcornet.

"Dear! how unhappy a poor child may be!" Martial went on. "Can there be anything more graceful and refined than our little stranger? Well, not one of those furies who stand round her, and who believe that they can feel, will say a word to her. If she would but speak, we should see if she has fine teeth."

"Bless me, you boil over like milk at the least increase of temperature?" cried the Colonel, a little nettled at so soon finding a rival in his friend.

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer, without heeding the General's question. "Can nobody here tell us the name of this exotic flower?"

"Some lady companion!" said Montcornet.

"What next? A companion! wearing sapphires fit for a queen, and a dress of Malines lace? Tell that to the marines, General. You, too, would not shine in diplomacy if, in the course of your conjectures, you jump in a breath from a German princess to a lady companion."

Montcornet stopped a man by taking his arm—a fat little man, whose iron-gray hair and clever eyes were to be seen at the lintel of every doorway, and who mingled unceremoniously with the various groups which welcomed him respectfully.

"Gondreville, my friend," said Montcornet, 'who is that quite charming little woman sitting out there under that huge candelabrum?"

"The candelabrum? Ravrio's work; Isabey made the design."

"Oh, I recognized your lavishness and taste; but the lady?"

"Ah! I do not know. Some friend of my wife's, no doubt."

"Or your mistress, you old rascal."

"No, on my honor. The Comtesse de Gondreville is the only person capable of inviting people whom no one knows."

In spite of this very acrimonious comment, the fat little man's lips did not lose the smile which the Colonel's suggestion had brought to them. Montcornet returned to the lawyer, who had joined a neighboring group, intent on asking, but in vain, for information as to the fair unknown. He grasped Martial's arm, and said in his ear:

"My dear Martial, mind what you are about. Madame de Vaudremont has been watching you for some minutes with ominous attentiveness; she is a woman who can guess by the mere movement of your lips what you say to me; our eyes have already told her too much; she has perceived and followed their direction, and I suspect that at this moment she is thinking even more than we are of the little blue lady."

"That is too old a trick in warfare, my dear Montcornet! However, what do I care? Like the Emperor, when I have made a conquest, I keep it."

"Martial, your fatuity cries out for a lesson. What! you, a civilian, and so lucky as to be the husband-designate of Madame de Vaudremont, a widow of two-and-twenty, burdened with four thousand napoleons a year—a woman who slips such a diamond as this on your finger," he added, taking the lawyer's left hand, which the young man complacently allowed; "and, to crown all, you affect the Lovelace, just as if you were a colonel and obliged to keep up

the reputation of the military in home quarters! Fie, fie! Only think of all you may lose."

"At any rate, I shall not lose my liberty," replied Martial, with a forced laugh.

He cast a passionate glance at Madame de Vaudremont, who responded only by a smile of some uneasiness, for she had seen the Colonel examining the lawyer's ring.

"Listen to me, Martial. If you flutter round my young stranger, I shall set to work to win Madame de Vaudremont."

"You have my full permission, my dear Cuirassier, but you will not gain this much," and the young Maître des Requêtes put his polished thumb-nail under an upper tooth with a little mocking click.

"Remember that I am unmarried," said the Colonel; "that my sword is my whole fortune; and that such a challenge is setting Tantalus down to a banquet which he will devour."

"Prrr."

This defiant roll of consonants was the only reply to the General's declaration, as Martial looked him from head to foot before turning away.

The fashion of the time required men to wear at a ball white kerseymere breeches and silk stockings. This pretty costume showed to great advantage the perfection of Montcornet's fine shape. He was five-and-thirty, and attracted attention by his stalwart height, insisted on for the Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard, whose handsome uniform enhanced the dignity of his figure, still youthful in spite of the stoutness occasioned by living on horseback. A black mustache emphasized the frank expression of a thoroughly soldierly countenance, with a broad, high forehead, an aquiline nose, and bright red lips. Montcornet's manner, stamped with a certain superiority due to the habit of command, might please a woman sensible enough not to aim at making a slave of her husband. The Colonel smiled as he looked at the lawyer, one of his favorite college friends,

whose small figure made it necessary for Montcornet to look down a little as he answered his raillery with a friendly glance.

Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal patronized by Napoleon; his fate might probably be some splendid embassy. He had won the Emperor by his Italian suppleness and a genius for intrigue, a drawing-room eloquence, and a knowledge of manners, which are so good a substitute for the higher qualities of a sterling man. Though young and eager, his face had already acquired the rigid brilliancy of tinned iron, one of the indispensable characteristics of diplomatists, which allows them to conceal their emotions and disguise their feelings, unless, indeed, this impassibility indicates an absence of all emotion and the death of every feeling. The heart of a diplomat may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the time have been distinguished by perdurable hatreds and most romantic attachments.

Martial, however, was one of those men who are capable of reckoning on the future in the midst of their intensest enjoyment; he had already learned to judge the world, and hid his ambition under the fatuity of a lady-killer, cloaking his talent under the commonplace of mediocrity as soon as he observed the rapid advancement of those men who gave the master little umbrage.

The two friends now had to part with a cordial grasp of hands. The introductory tune, warning the ladies to form in squares for a fresh quadrille, cleared the men away from the space they had filled while talking in the middle of the large room. This hurried dialogue had taken place during the usual interval between two dances, in front of the fireplace of the great drawing-room of Gondreville's mansion. The questions and answers of this very ordinary ball-room gossip had been almost whispered by each of the speakers into his neighbor's ear. At the same time, the chandeliers and the flambeaux on the chimney-shelf shed such a flood of light on the two friends that their faces, strongly illumi-

nated, failed, in spite of their diplomatic discretion, to conceal the faint expression of their feelings either from the keen-sighted countess or the artless stranger. This espionage of people's thoughts is perhaps to idle persons one of the pleasures they find in society, while numbers of disappointed numskulls are bored there without daring to own it.

Fully to appreciate the interest of this conversation, it is necessary to relate an incident which would presently serve as an invisible bond, drawing together the actors in this little drama, who were at present scattered through the rooms.

At about eleven o'clock, just as the dancers were returning to their seats, the company had observed the entrance of the handsomest woman in Paris, the queen of fashion, the only person wanting to this brilliant assembly. She made it a rule never to appear till the moment when a party had reached that pitch of excited movement which does not allow the women to preserve much longer the freshness of their faces or of their dress. This brief hour is, as it were, the springtime of a ball. An hour after, when pleasure falls flat and fatigue is encroaching, everything is spoiled. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the blunder of remaining at a party to be seen with drooping flowers, hair out of curl, tumbled frills, and a face like every other that sleep is courting—not always without success. She took good care not to let her beauty be seen drowsy, as her rivals did; she was so clever as to keep up her reputation for smartness by always leaving a ballroom in brilliant order, as she had entered it. Women whispered to each other with a feeling of envy that she planned and wore as many different dresses as the parties she went to in one evening.

On the present occasion Madame de Vaudremont was not destined to be free to leave when she would the ballroom she had entered in triumph. Pausing for a moment

on the threshold, she shot swift but observant glances on the women present, hastily scrutinizing their dresses to assure herself that her own eclipsed them all.

The illustrious beauty presented herself to the admiration of the crowd at the same moment with one of the bravest colonels of the Guards' Artillery and the Emperor's favorite, the Comte de Soulanges. The transient and fortuitous association of these two had about it a certain air of mystery. On hearing the names announced of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont, a few women sitting by the wall rose, and men, hurrying in from the side-rooms, pressed forward to the principal doorway. One of the jesters who are always to be found in any large assembly said, as the Countess and her escort came in, that "women had quite as much curiosity about seeing a man who was faithful to his passion as men had in studying a woman who was difficult to inthrall."

Though the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of about two-and-thirty, was endowed with the nervous temperament which in a man gives rise to fine qualities, his slender build and pale complexion were not at first sight attractive; his black eyes betrayed great vivacity, but he was taciturn in company, and there was nothing in his appearance to reveal the gift for oratory which subsequently distinguished him, on the Right, in the legislative assembly under the Restoration.

The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall woman, rather fat, with a skin of dazzling whiteness, a small head that she carried well, and the immense advantage of inspiring love by the graciousness of her manner, was one of those beings who keep all the promise of their beauty.

The pair, who for a few minutes were the centre of general observation, did not for long give curiosity an opportunity of exercising itself about them. The Colonel and the Countess seemed perfectly to understand that accident had placed them in an awkward position. Martial, as they

came forward, had hastened to join the group of men by the fireplace, that he might watch Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous anxiety of the first flame of passion, from behind the heads which formed a sort of rampart; a secret voice seemed to warn him that the success on which he prided himself might perhaps be precarious. But the coldly polite smile with which the Countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges, and her little bow of dismissal as she sat down by Madame de Gondreville, relaxed the muscles of his face which jealousy had made rigid. Seeing Soulanges, however, still standing quite near the sofa on which Madame de Vaudremont was seated, not apparently having understood the glance by which the lady had conveyed to him that they were both playing a ridiculous part, the volcanic Provençal again knit the black brows that overshadowed his blue eyes, smoothed his chestnut curls to keep himself in countenance, and without betraying the agitation which made his heart beat, watched the faces of the Countess and of M. de Soulanges while still chatting with his neighbors. He then took the hand of Colonel Montcornet, who had just renewed their old acquaintance, but he listened to him without hearing him; his mind was elsewhere.

Soulanges was gazing calmly at the women, sitting four ranks deep all round the immense ballroom, admiring this dado of diamonds, rubies, masses of gold and shining hair, of which the lustre almost outshone the blaze of waxlights, the cut-glass of the chandeliers, and the gilding. His rival's stolid indifference put the lawyer out of countenance. Quite incapable of controlling his secret transports of impatience, Martial went toward Madame de Vaudremont with a bow. On seeing the Provençal, Soulanges gave him a covert glance, and impertinently turned away his head. Solemn silence now reigned in the room, where curiosity was at the highest pitch. All these eager faces wore the strangest mixed expressions; every one apprehended one of those outbreaks which men of breeding carefully avoid. Suddenly the Count's pale face turned as red as the scarlet fac-

ings of his coat, and he fixed his gaze on the floor that the cause of his agitation might not be guessed. On catching sight of the unknown lady humbly seated by the pedestal of the candelabrum, he moved away with a melancholy air, passing in front of the lawyer, and took refuge in one of the card-rooms. Martial and all the company thought that Soulanges had publicly surrendered the post, out of fear of the ridicule which invariably attaches to a discarded lover. The lawyer proudly raised his head and looked at the strange lady; then, as he took his seat at his ease near Madame de Vaudremont, he listened to her so inattentively that he did not catch these words spoken behind her fan:

"Martial, you will oblige me this evening by not wearing that ring that you snatched from me. I have my reasons, and will explain them to you in a moment when we go away. You must give me your arm to go to the Princesse de Wagram's."

"Why did you come in with the Colonel?" asked the Baron.

"I met him in the hall," she replied. "But leave me now; everybody is looking at us."

Martial returned to the Colonel of Cuirassiers. Then it was that the little blue lady had become the object of the curiosity which agitated in such various ways the Colonel, Soulanges, Martial, and Madame de Vaudremont.

When the friends parted, after the challenge which closed their conversation, the Baron flew to Madame de Vaudremont, and led her to a place in the most brilliant quadrille. Favored by the sort of intoxication which dancing always produces in a woman, and by the turmoil of a ball, where men appear in all the trickery of dress, which adds no less to their attractions than it does to those of women, Martial thought he might yield with impunity to the charm that attracted his gaze to the fair stranger. Though he succeeded in hiding his first glances toward the lady in blue from the anxious activity of the Countess's

eyes, he was ere long caught in the fact; and though he managed to excuse himself once for his absence of mind, he could not justify the unseemly silence with which he presently heard the most insinuating question which a woman can put to a man:

"Do you like me very much this evening?"

And the more dreamy he became, the more the Countess pressed and teased him.

While Martial was dancing, the Colonel moved from group to group, seeking information about the unknown lady. After exhausting the good-humor even of the most indifferent, he had resolved to take advantage of a moment when the Comtesse de Gondreville seemed to be at liberty, to ask her the name of the mysterious lady, when he perceived a little space left clear between the pedestal of the candelabrum and the two sofas, which ended in that corner. The dance had left several of the chairs vacant, which formed rows of fortifications held by mothers or women of middle age; and the Colonel seized the opportunity to make his way through this palisade hung with shawls and wraps. He began by making himself agreeable to the dowagers, and so from one to another, and from compliment to compliment, he at last reached the empty space next the stranger. At the risk of catching on to the griffins and chimeras of the huge candelabrum, he stood there, braving the glare and dropping of the wax candles, to Martial's extreme annoyance.

The Colonel, far too tactful to speak suddenly to the little blue lady on his right, began by saying to a plain woman who was seated on the left:

"This is a splendid ball, Madame! What luxury! What life! On my word, every woman here is pretty! You are not dancing—because you do not care for it, no doubt."

This vapid conversation was solely intended to induce his right-hand neighbor to speak; but she, silent and absent-minded, paid not the least attention. The officer had

in store a number of phrases which he intended should lead up to: "And you, Madame?"—a question from which he hoped great things. But he was strangely surprised to see tears in the strange lady's eyes, which seemed wholly absorbed in gazing on Madame de Vaudremont.

"You are married, no doubt, Madame?" he asked her at length, in hesitating tones.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the lady.

"And your husband is here, of course?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And why, Madame, do you remain in this spot? Is it to attract attention?"

The mournful lady smiled sadly.

"Allow me the honor, Madame, of being your partner in the next quadrille, and I will take care not to bring you back here. I see a vacant settee near the fire; come and take it. When so many people are ready to ascend the throne, and Royalty is the mania of the day, I cannot imagine that you will refuse the title of Queen of the Ball which your beauty may claim."

"I do not intend to dance, Monsieur."

The curt tone of the lady's replies was so discouraging that the Colonel found himself compelled to raise the siege. Martial, who guessed what the officer's last request had been, and the refusal he had met with, began to smile, and stroked his chin, making the diamond sparkle which he wore on his finger.

"What are you laughing at?" said the Comtesse de Vaudremont.

"At the failure of the poor Colonel, who has just put his foot in it—"

"I begged you to take your ring off," said the Countess, interrupting him.

"I did not hear you."

"If you can hear nothing this evening, at any rate you see everything, Monsieur le Baron," said Madame de Vaudremont, with an air of vexation.

"That young man is displaying a very fine diamond," the stranger remarked to the Colonel.

"Splendid," he replied. "The man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends."

"I have to thank you for telling me his name," she went on; "he seems an agreeable man."

"Yes, but he is rather fickle."

"He seems to be on the best terms with the Comtesse de Vaudremont?" said the lady, with an inquiring look at the Colonel.

"On the very best."

The unknown turned pale.

"Hallo!" thought the soldier, "she is in love with that lucky devil Martial."

"I fancied that Madame de Vaudremont had long been devoted to M. de Soulanges," said the lady, recovering a little from the suppressed grief which had clouded the fairness of her face.

"For a week past the Countess has been faithless," replied the Colonel. "But you must have seen poor Soulanges when he came in; he is still trying to disbelieve in his disaster."

"Yes, I saw him," said the lady. Then she added, "Thank you very much, Monsieur," in a tone which signified a dismissal.

At this moment the quadrille was coming to an end. Montcornet had only time to withdraw, saying to himself by way of consolation, "She is married."

"Well, valiant Cuirassier," exclaimed the Baron, drawing the Colonel aside into a window-bay to breathe the fresh air from the garden, "how are you getting on?"

"She is a married woman, my dear fellow."

"What does that matter?"

"Oh, deuce take it! I am a decent sort of man," replied the Colonel. "I have no idea of paying my addresses to a woman I cannot marry. Besides, Martial, she expressly told me that she did not intend to dance."

"Colonel, I will bet a hundred napoleons to your gray horse that she will dance with me this evening."

"Done!" said the Colonel, putting his hand in the coxcomb's. "Meanwhile I am going to look for Soulanges; he perhaps knows the lady, as she seems interested in him."

"You have lost, my good fellow," cried Martial, laughing. "My eyes have met hers, and I know what they mean. My dear friend, you owe me no grudge for dancing with her after she has refused you?"

"No, no. Those who laugh last, laugh longest. But I am an honest gambler and a generous enemy, Martial, and I warn you, she is fond of diamonds."

With these words the friends parted; General Montcornet made his way to the card-room, where he saw the Comte de Soulanges sitting at a *bouillotte* table. Though there was no friendship between the two soldiers, beyond the superficial comradeship arising from the perils of war and the duties of the ser ice, the Colonel of Cuirassiers was painfully struck by seeing the Colonel of Artillery, whom he knew to be a prudent man, playing at a game which might bring him to ruin. The heaps of gold and notes piled on the fateful cards showed the frenzy of play. A circle of silent men stood round the players at the table. Now and then a few words were spoken—*pass*, *play*, *I stop*, *a thousand louis*, *taken*—but, looking at the five motionless men, it seemed as though they talked only with their eyes. As the Colonel, alarmed by Soulanges' pallor, went up to him, the Count was winning. Field-Marshal the Duc d'Isemberg, Keller, and a famous banker rose from the table completely cleaned out of considerable sums. Soulanges looked gloomier than ever as he swept up a quantity of gold and notes; he did not even count it; his lips curled with bitter scorn, he seemed to defy fortune rather than be grateful for her favors.

"Courage," said the Colonel. "Courage, Soulanges!" Then, believing he would do him a service by dragging him from play, he added: "Come with me. I have some good news for you, but on one condition."

"What is that?" asked Soulanges.

"That you will answer a question I will ask you."

The Comte de Soulanges rose abruptly, placing his winnings with reckless indifference in his handkerchief, which he had been twisting with convulsive nervousness, and his expression was so savage that none of the players took exception to his walking off with their money. Indeed, every face seemed to dilate with relief when his morose and crabbed countenance was no longer to be seen under the circle of light which a shaded lamp casts on a gaming table.

"Those fiends of soldiers are always as thick as thieves at a fair!" said a diplomat who had been looking on, as he took Soulanges' place. One single pallid and fatigued face turned to the new-comer, and said with a glance that flashed and died out like the sparkle of a diamond: "When we say military, we do not mean civil, Monsieur le Ministre."

"My dear fellow," said Montcornet to Soulanges, leading him into a corner, "the Emperor spoke warmly in your praise this morning, and your promotion to be field-marshal is a certainty."

"The Master does not love the Artillery."

"No, but he adores the nobility, and you are an aristocrat. The Master said," added Montcornet, "that the men who had married in Paris during the campaign were not therefore to be considered in disgrace. Well then?"

The Comte de Soulanges looked as if he understood nothing of this speech.

"And now I hope," the Colonel went on, "that you will tell me if you know a charming little woman who is sitting under a huge candelabrum—"

At these words the Count's face lighted up; he violently seized the Colonel's hand: "My dear General," said he, in a perceptibly altered voice, "if any man but you had asked me such a question, I would have cracked his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat you. I feel more like blowing out my brains this evening, I assure you, than— I hate everything I see. And, in fact, I am going.

This gayety, this music, these stupid faces, all laughing, are killing me!"

"My poor friend!" replied Montcornet gently, and giving the Count's hand a friendly pressure, "you are too vehement. What would you say if I told you that Martial is thinking so little of Madame de Vaudremont that he is quite smitten with that little lady?"

"If he says a word to her," cried Soulanges, stammering with rage, "I will thrash him as flat as his own portfolio, even if the coxcomb were in the Emperor's lap!"

And he sank quite overcome on an easy-chair to which Montcornet had led him. The Colonel slowly went away, for he perceived that Soulanges was in a state of fury far too violent for the pleasantries or the attentions of superficial friendship to soothe him.

When Montcornet returned to the ballroom, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person on whom his eyes fell, and he observed on her face, usually so calm, some symptoms of ill-disguised agitation. A chair was vacant near hers, and the Colonel seated himself.

"I dare wager something has vexed you?" said he.

"A mere trifle, General. I want to be gone, for I have promised to go to a ball at the Grandduchess of Berg's, and I must look in first at the Princesse de Wagram's. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows this, is amusing himself by flirting with the dowagers."

"That is not the whole secret of your disturbance, and I will bet a hundred louis that you will remain here the whole evening."

"Impertinent man!"

"Then I have hit the truth?"

"Well, tell me, what am I thinking of?" said the Countess, tapping the Colonel's fingers with her fan. "I might even reward you if you guess rightly."

"I will not accept the challenge; I have too much the advantage of you."

"You are presumptuous."

"You are afraid of seeing Martial at the feet—"

"Of whom?" cried the Countess, affecting surprise.

"Of that candelabrum," replied the Colonel, glancing at the fair stranger, and then looking at the Countess with embarrassing scrutiny.

"You have guessed it," replied the coquette, hiding her face behind her fan, which she began to play with. "Old Madame de Lansac, who is, you know, as malicious as an old monkey," she went on, after a pause, "has just told me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon is running into danger by flirting with that stranger, who sits here this evening like a skeleton at a feast. I would rather see a death's-head than that face, so cruelly beautiful, and as pale as a ghost. She is my evil genius.—Madame de Lansac," she added, after a flash and gesture of annoyance, "who only goes to a ball to watch everything while pretending to sleep, has made me miserably anxious. Martial shall pay dearly for playing me such a trick. Urge him, meanwhile, since he is your friend, not to make me so unhappy"

"I have just been with a man who promises to blow his brains out, and nothing less, if he speaks to that little lady. And he is the man, Madame, to keep his word. But then I know Martial; such threats are to him an encouragement. And, besides, we have wagered—" Here the Colonel lowered his voice.

"Can it be true?" said the Countess.

"On my word of honor."

"Thank you, my dear Colonel," replied Madame de Vaudremont, with a glance full of invitation.

"Will you do me the honor of dancing with me?"

"Yes; but the next quadrille. During this one I want to find out what will come of this little intrigue, and to ascertain who the little blue lady may be; she looks intelligent."

The Colonel, understanding that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, retired, well content to have begun his attack so well.

At most entertainments women are to be met who are there, like Madame de Lansac, as old sailors gather on the seashore to watch younger mariners struggling with the tempest. At this moment Madame de Lansac, who seemed to be interested in the personages of this drama, could easily guess the agitation which the Countess was going through. The lady might fan herself gracefully, smile on the young men who bowed to her, and bring into play all the arts by which a woman hides her emotion—the Dowager, one of the most clear-sighted and mischief-loving duchesses bequeathed by the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, could read her heart and mind through it all.

The old lady seemed to detect the slightest movement that revealed the impressions of the soul. The imperceptible frown that furrowed that calm, pure forehead, the faintest quiver of the cheeks, the curve of the eyebrows, the least curl of the lips, whose living coral could conceal nothing from her, all these were to the Duchess like the print of a book. From the depths of her large armchair, completely filled by the flow of her dress, the coquette of the past, while talking to a diplomat who had sought her out to hear the anecdotes she told so cleverly, was admiring herself in the younger coquette; she felt kindly to her, seeing how bravely she disguised her annoyance and grief of heart. Madame de Vaudremont, in fact, felt as much sorrow as she feigned cheerfulness; she had believed that she had found in Martial a man of talent on whose support she could count for adorning her life with all the enchantment of power; and at this moment she perceived her mistake, as injurious to her reputation as to her good opinion of herself. In her, as in other women of that time, the suddenness of their passions increased their vehemence. Souls which love much and love often, suffer no less than those which burn themselves out in one affection. Her liking for Martial was but of yesterday, it is true, but the least experienced surgeon knows that the pain caused by the amputation of a healthy limb is more acute than the removal of

a diseased one. There was a future before Madame de Vaudremont's passion for Martial, while her previous love had been hopeless, and poisoned by Soulanges' remorse.

The old Duchess, who was watching for an opportunity of speaking to the Countess, hastened to dismiss her Ambassador; for in comparison with a lovers' quarrel every interest pales, even with an old woman. To engage battle, Madame de Lansac shot at the younger lady a sardonic glance which made the Countess fear lest her fate was in the dowager's hands. There are looks between woman and woman which are like the torches brought on at the climax of a tragedy. No one who had not known that Duchess could appreciate the terror which the expression of her countenance inspired in the Countess.

Madame de Lansac was tall, and her features led people to say, "That must have been a handsome woman!" She coated her cheeks so thickly with rouge that the wrinkles were scarcely visible; but her eyes, far from gaining a factitious brilliancy from this strong carmine, looked all the more dim. She wore a vast quantity of diamonds, and dressed with sufficient taste not to make herself ridiculous. Her sharp nose promised epigram. A well-fitted set of teeth preserved a smile of such irony as recalled that of Voltaire. At the same time, the exquisite politeness of her manners so effectually softened the mischievous twist in her mind that it was impossible to accuse her of spitefulness.

The old woman's eyes lighted up, and a triumphant glance, seconded by a smile, which said, "I promised you as much!" shot across the room, and brought a blush of hope to the pale cheeks of the young creature languishing under the great chandelier. This alliance between Madame de Lansac and the stranger could not escape the practiced eye of the Comtesse de Vaudremont, who scented a mystery, and was determined to penetrate it.

At this instant the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, after questioning all the dowagers without success as to the blue lady's

name, applied in despair to the Comtesse de Gondreville, from whom he received only this unsatisfactory reply, "A lady whom the 'ancient' Duchesse de Lansac introduced to me."

Turning by chance toward the armchair occupied by the old lady, the lawyer intercepted the glance of intelligence she sent to the stranger; and although he had for some time been on bad terms with her, he determined to speak to her. The "ancient" Duchess, seeing the jaunty Baron prowling round her chair, smiled with sardonic irony, and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an expression that made Montcornet laugh.

"If the old witch affects to be friendly," thought the Baron, "she is certainly going to play me some spiteful trick.—Madame," he said, "you have, I am told, undertaken the charge of a very precious treasure."

"Do you take me for a dragon?" said the old lady. "But of whom are you speaking?" she added, with a sweetness which revived Martial's hopes.

"Of that little lady, unknown to all, whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has imprisoned in that corner. You, no doubt, know her family?"

"Yes," said the Duchess. "But what concern have you with a provincial heiress, married some time since, a woman of good birth whom you none of you know, you men; she goes nowhere."

"Why does not she dance, she is such a pretty creature? —May we conclude a treaty of peace? If you will vouchsafe to tell me all I want to know, I promise you that a petition for the restitution of the woods of Navarreins by the Commissioners of Crown Lands shall be strongly urged on the Emperor."

The younger branch of the House of Navarreins bears quarterly with the arms of Navarreins those of Lansac, namely, azure and argent party per pale raguly, between six spear-heads in pale, and the old lady's liaison with Louis XV. had earned her husband the title of duke by

royal patent. Now, as the Navarreins had not yet resettled in France, it was sheer trickery that the young lawyer thus proposed to the old lady by suggesting to her that she should petition for an estate belonging to the elder branch of the family.

"Monsieur," said the old woman with deceptive gravity, "bring the Comtesse de Vaudremont across to me. I promise you that I will reveal to her the mystery of the interesting unknown. You see, every man in the room has reached as great a curiosity as your own. All eyes are involuntarily turned toward the corner where my protégée has so modestly placed herself; she is reaping all the homage the women wished to deprive her of. Happy the man she chooses for her partner!" She interrupted herself, fixing her eyes on Madame de Vaudremont with one of those looks which plainly say, "We are talking of you."—Then she added, "I imagine you would rather learn the stranger's name from the lips of your handsome Countess than from mine."

There was such marked defiance in the Duchess's attitude that Madame de Vaudremont rose, came up to her, and took the chair Martial placed for her; then without noticing him she said, "I can guess, Madame, that you are talking of me; but I admit my want of perspicacity; I do not know whether it is for good or evil."

Madame de Lansac pressed the young woman's pretty hand in her own dry and wrinkled fingers, and answered in a low, compassionate tone, "Poor child!"

The women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont understood that Martial was in the way, and dismissed him, saying with an imperious expression, "Leave us."

The Baron, ill pleased at seeing the Countess under the spell of the dangerous sibyl who had drawn her to her side, gave one of those looks which a man can give—potent over a blinded heart, but simply ridiculous in the eyes of a woman who is beginning to criticise the man who has attracted her.

"Do you think you can play the Emperor?" said

Madame de Vaudremont, turning three-quarters of her face to fix an ironical sidelong gaze on the lawyer.

Martial was too much a man of the world, and had too much wit and acumen, to risk breaking with a woman who was in favor at Court, and whom the Emperor wished to see married. He counted, too, on the jealousy he intended to provoke in her as the surest means of discovering the secret of her coolness, and withdrew all the more willingly, because at this moment a new quadrille was putting everybody in motion.

With an air of making room for the dancing, the Baron leaned back against the marble slab of a console, folded his arms, and stood absorbed in watching the two ladies talking. From time to time he followed the glances which both frequently directed to the stranger. Then, comparing the Countess with the new beauty, made so attractive by a touch of mystery, the Baron fell a prey to the detestable self-interest common to adventurous lady-killers; he hesitated between a fortune within his grasp and the indulgence of his caprice. The blaze of light gave such strong relief to his anxious and sullen face, against the hangings of white silk moreen brushed by his black hair, that he might have been compared to an evil genius. Even from a distance more than one observer no doubt said to himself, "There is another poor wretch who seems to be enjoying himself!"

The Colonel, meanwhile, with one shoulder leaning lightly against the side-post of the doorway between the ball-room and the card-room, could laugh undetected under his ample mustache; it amused him to look on at the turmoil of the dance; he could see a hundred pretty heads turning about in obedience to the figures; he could read in some faces, as in those of the Countess and his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation; and then, looking round, he wondered what connection there could be between the gloomy looks of the Comte de Soulanges, still seated on the sofa, and the plaintive expression of the fair unknown, on whose features the joys of hope and the anguish of invol-

untary dread were alternately legible. Montcornet stood like the king of the feast. In this moving picture he saw a complete presentment of the world, and he laughed at it as he found himself the object of inviting smiles from a hundred beautiful and elegant women. A Colonel of the Imperial Guard, a position equal to that of a Brigadier-General, was undoubtedly one of the best matches in the army.

It was now nearly midnight. The conversation, the gambling, the dancing, the flirtations, interests, petty rivalries, and scheming had all reached the pitch of ardor which makes a young man exclaim involuntarily, "A fine ball!"

"My sweet little angel," said Madame de Lansac to the Countess, "you are now at an age when in my day I made many mistakes. Seeing you just now enduring a thousand deaths, it occurred to me that I might give you some charitable advice. To go wrong at two-and-twenty means spoiling your future; is it not tearing the gown you must wear? My dear, it is not till much later that we learn to go about in it without crumpling it. Go on, sweetheart, making clever enemies, and friends who have no sense of conduct, and you will see what a pleasant life you will some day be leading!"

"Oh, Madame, it is very hard for a woman to be happy, do not you think?" the Countess eagerly exclaimed.

"My child, at your age you must learn to choose between pleasure and happiness. You want to marry Martial, who is not fool enough to make a good husband, nor passionate enough to remain a lover. He is in debt, my dear; he is the man to run through your fortune; still, that would be nothing if he could make you happy.—Do not you see how aged he is? The man must have been often ill; he is making the most of what is left him. In three years he will be a wreck. Then he will be ambitious; perhaps he may succeed. I do not think so.—What is he? A man of intrigue, who may have the business faculty to perfection, and be able to gossip agreeably; but he is too presumptuous to have any sterling

merit; he will not go far. Besides—only look at him. Is it not written on his brow that, at this very moment, what he sees in you is not a young and pretty woman, but the two million francs you possess? He does not love you, my dear; he is reckoning you up as if you were an investment. If you are bent on marrying, find an older man who has an assured position and is half-way on his career. A widow's marriage ought not to be a trivial love affair. Is a mouse to be caught a second time in the same trap? A new alliance ought now to be a good speculation on your part, and in marrying again you ought at least to have a hope of being some day addressed as Madame la Maréchale."

As she spoke both women naturally fixed their eyes on Colonel Montcornet's handsome face.

"If you would rather play the delicate part of a flirt and not marry again," the Duchess went on, with blunt good-nature; "well! my poor child, you, better than any woman, will know how to raise the storm-clouds and disperse them again. But, I beseech you, never make it your pleasure to disturb the peace of families, to destroy unions, and ruin the happiness of happy wives. I, my dear, have played that perilous game. Dear heaven! for a triumph of vanity some poor virtuous soul is murdered—for there really are virtuous women, child—and we may make ourselves mortally hated. I learned, a little too late, that, as the Duc d'Albe once said, one salmon is worth a thousand frogs! A genuine affection certainly brings a thousand times more happiness than the transient passions we may inspire.—Well, I came here on purpose to preach to you; yes, you are the cause of my appearance in this house, which stinks of the lower class. Have I not just seen actors here? Formerly, my dear, we received them in our boudoir; but in the drawing-room—never!—Why do you look at me with so much amazement? Listen to me. If you want to play with men, do not try to wring the hearts of any but those whose life is not yet settled, who have no duties to fulfil; the others do not forgive us for the errors that have made them happy. Profit by this

maxim, founded on my long experience.—That luckless Soulanges, for instance, whose head you have turned, whom you have intoxicated for these fifteen months past, God knows how! Do you know at what you have struck?—At his whole life. He has been married these two years; he is worshipped by a charming wife, whom he loves, but neglects; she lives in tears and imbittered silence. Soulanges has had hours of remorse more terrible than his pleasure has been sweet. And you, you artful little thing, have deserted him.—Well, come and see your work."

The old lady took Madame de Vaudremont's hand, and they rose.

"There," said Madame de Lansac, and her eyes showed her the stranger sitting pale and tremulous under the glare of the candles, "that is my grandniece, the Comtesse de Soulanges; to-day she yielded at last to my persuasion, and consented to leave the sorrowful room, where the sight of her child gives her but little consolation. You see her? You think her charming? Then imagine, dear Beauty, what she must have been when happiness and love shed their glory on that face now blighted."

The Countess looked away in silence, and seemed lost in sad reflections.

The Duchess led her to the door into the card-room; then, after looking round the room as if in search of some one—"And there is Soulanges!" she said in deep tones.

The Countess shuddered as she saw, in the least brilliantly lighted corner, the pale, set face of Soulanges stretched in an easy-chair. The indifference of his attitude and the rigidity of his brow betrayed his suffering. The players passed him to and fro, without paying any more attention to him than if he had been dead. The picture of the wife in tears, and the dejected, morose husband, separated in the midst of this festivity like the two halves of a tree blasted by lightning, had perhaps a prophetic significance for the Countess. She dreaded lest she here saw an image of the revenges the future might have in store for

her. Her heart was not yet so dried up that feeling and generosity were entirely excluded, and she pressed the Duchess's hand, while thanking her by one of those smiles which have a certain childlike grace.

"My dear child," the old lady said in her ear, "remember henceforth that we are just as capable of repelling a man's attentions as of attracting them."

"She is yours if you are not a simpleton." These words were whispered into Colonel Montcornet's ear by Madame de Lansac, while the handsome Countess was still absorbed in compassion at the sight of Soulanges, for she still loved him truly enough to wish to restore him to happiness, and was promising herself in her own mind that she would exert the irresistible power her charms still had over him to make him return to his wife.

"Oh! I will talk to him!" said she to Madame de Lansac.

"Do nothing of the kind, my dear!" cried the old lady, as she went back to her armchair. "Choose a good husband, and shut your door to my nephew. Believe me, my child, a wife cannot accept her husband's heart as the gift of another woman; she is a hundred times happier in the belief that she has reconquered it. By bringing my niece here I believe I have given her an excellent chance of regaining her husband's affection. All the assistance I need of you is to play the Colonel." She pointed to the Baron's friend, and the Countess smiled.

"Well, Madame, do you at last know the name of the unknown?" asked Martial, with an air of pique, of the Countess when he saw her alone.

"Yes," said Madame de Vaudremont, looking him in the face.

Her features expressed as much roguery as fun. The smile which gave life to her lips and cheeks, the liquid brightness of her eyes, were like the will-o'-the-wisp which leads travellers astray. Martial, who believed that she still loved him, assumed the coquetting graces in which a man

is so ready to lull himself in the presence of the woman he loves. He said with a fatuous air:

"And will you be annoyed with me if I seem to attach great importance to your telling me that name?"

"Will you be annoyed with me," answered Madame de Vaudremont, "if a remnant of affection prevents my telling you; and if I forbid you to make the smallest advances to that young lady? It would be at the risk of your life perhaps."

"To lose your good graces, Madame, would be worse than to lose my life."

"Martial," said the Countess severely, "she is Madame de Soulanges. Her husband would blow your brains out—if, indeed, you have any—"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the coxcomb. "What! the Colonel can leave the man in peace who has robbed him of your love, and then would fight for his wife! What a subversion of principles!—I beg of you to allow me to dance with the little lady. You will then be able to judge how little love that heart of ice could feel for you; for, if the Colonel disapproves of my dancing with his wife after allowing me to—"

"But she loves her husband."

"A still further obstacle that I shall have the pleasure of conquering."

"But she is married."

"A whimsical objection!"

"Ah!" said the Countess, with a bitter smile, "you punish us alike for our faults and our repentance!"

"Do not be angry!" exclaimed Martial eagerly. "Oh, forgive me, I beseech you. There, I will think no more of Madame de Soulanges."

"You deserve that I should send you to her."

"I am off then," said the Baron, laughing, "and I shall return more devoted to you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world cannot capture the heart that is yours."

"That is to say, that you want to win Colonel Montcornet's horse?"

"Ah! Traitor!" said he, threatening his friend with his finger. The Colonel smiled and joined them; the Baron gave him the seat near the Countess, saying to her with a sardonic accent: "Here, Madame, is a man who boasted that he could win your good graces in one evening."

He went away, thinking himself clever to have piqued the Countess's pride and done Montcornet an ill turn; but, in spite of his habitual keenness, he had not appreciated the irony underlying Madame de Vaudremont's speech, and did not perceive that she had come as far to meet his friend as his friend toward her, though both were unconscious of it.

At the moment when the lawyer went fluttering up to the candelabrum by which Madame de Soulanges sat, pale, timid, and apparently alive only in her eyes, her husband came to the door of the ballroom, his eyes flashing with anger. The old Duchess, watchful of everything, flew to her nephew, begged him to give her his arm and find her carriage, affecting to be mortally bored, and hoping thus to prevent a vexatious outbreak. Before going she fired a singular glance of intelligence at her niece, indicating the enterprising knight who was about to address her, and this signal seemed to say, "There he is, avenge yourself!"

Madame de Vaudremont caught these looks of the aunt and niece; a sudden light dawned on her mind; she was frightened lest she was the dupe of this old woman, so cunning and so practiced in intrigue.

"That perfidious Duchess," said she to herself, "has perhaps been amusing herself by preaching morality to me while playing me some spiteful trick of her own."

At this thought Madame de Vaudremont's pride was perhaps more roused than her curiosity to disentangle the thread of this intrigue. In the absorption of mind to which she was a prey she was no longer mistress of herself. The Colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the embarrassment evident in the Countess's manner and speech, became

more ardent and pressing. The old blasé diplomats, amusing themselves by watching the play of faces, had never found so many intrigues at once to watch or guess at. The passions agitating the two couples were to be seen with variations at every step in the crowded rooms, and reflected with different shades in other countenances. The spectacle of so many vivid passions, of all these lovers' quarrels, these pleasing revenges, these cruel favors, these flaming glances, of all this ardent life diffused around them, only made them feel their impotence more keenly.

At last the Baron had found a seat by Madame de Soulanges. His eyes stole a long look at her neck, as fresh as dew and as fragrant as field flowers. He admired close at hand the beauty which had amazed him from afar. He could see a small, well-shod foot, and measure with his eye a slender and graceful shape. At that time women wore their sash tied close under the bosom, in imitation of Greek statues, a pitiless fashion for those whose bust was faulty. As he cast furtive glances at the Countess's figure, Martial was enchanted with its perfection.

"You have not danced once this evening, Madame," said he in soft and flattering tones. "Not, I should suppose, for lack of a partner?"

"I never go to parties; I am quite unknown," replied Madame de Soulanges coldly, not having understood the look by which her aunt had just conveyed to her that she was to attract the Baron.

Martial, to give himself countenance, twisted the diamond he wore on his left hand; the rainbow fires of the gem seemed to flash a sudden light on the young Countess's mind; she blushed and looked at the Baron with an undefinable expression.

"Do you like dancing?" asked the Provençal, to reopen the conversation.

"Yes, very much, Monsieur."

At this strange reply their eyes met. The young man, surprised by the earnest accent, which aroused a vague

hope in his heart, had suddenly questioned the lady's eyes.

"Then, Madame, am I not overbold in offering myself to be your partner for the next quadrille?"

Artless confusion colored the Countess's white cheeks.

"But, Monsieur, I have already refused one partner—a military man—"

"Was it that tall cavalry Colonel whom you see over there?"

"Precisely so."

"Oh! he is a friend of mine; feel no alarm. Will you grant me the favor I dare hope for?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

Her tone betrayed an emotion so new and so deep that the lawyer's world-worn soul was touched. He was overcome by shyness like a schoolboy's, lost his confidence, and his southern brain caught fire; he tried to talk, but his phrases struck him as graceless in comparison with Madame de Soulanges' bright and subtle replies. It was lucky for him that the quadrille was forming. Standing by his beautiful partner, he felt more at ease. To many men dancing is a phase of being; they think that they can more powerfully influence the heart of woman by displaying the graces of their bodies than by their intellect. Martial wished, no doubt, at this moment to put forth all his most effective seductions, to judge by the pretentiousness of his movements and gestures.

He led his conquest to the quadrille in which the most brilliant women in the room made it a point of chimerical importance to dance in preference to any other. While the orchestra played the introductory bars to the first figure, the Baron felt it an incredible gratification to his pride to perceive, as he reviewed the ladies forming the lines of that formidable square, that Madame de Soulanges' dress might challenge that even of Madame de Vaudremont, who, by a chance not perhaps unsought, was standing with Montcornet *vis-a-vis* to himself and the lady in blue. All eyes

were for a moment turned on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur showed that she was the subject of every man's conversation with his partner. Looks of admiration and envy centred on her, with so much eagerness that the young creature, abashed by a triumph she seemed to disclaim, modestly looked down, blushed, and was all the more charming. When she raised her white eyelids it was to look at her ravished partner as though she wished to transfer the glory of this admiration to him, and to say that she cared more for his than for all the rest. She threw her innocence into her vanity; or rather she seemed to give herself up to the guileless admiration which is the beginning of love, with the good faith found only in youthful hearts. As she danced, the lookers-on might easily believe that she displayed her grace for Martial alone; and though she was modest, and new to the trickery of the ballroom, she knew as well as the most accomplished coquette how to raise her eyes to his at the right moment and drop their lids with assumed modesty.

When the movement of a new figure, invented by a dancer named Trénis, and named after him, brought Martial face to face with the Colonel—"I have won your horse," said he, laughing.

"Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs a year!" retorted Montcornet, glancing at Madame de Vaudremont.

"What do I care?" replied Martial. "Madame de Soulanges is worth millions!"

At the end of the quadrille more than one whisper was poured into more than one ear. The less pretty women made moral speeches to their partners, commenting on the budding *liaison* between Martial and the Comtesse de Soulanges. The handsomest wondered at her easy surrender. The men could not understand such luck as the Baron's, not regarding him as particularly fascinating. A few indulgent women said it was not fair to judge the Countess too hastily; young wives would be in a very hapless plight if an expressive look

or a few graceful dancing steps were enough to compromise a woman.

Martial alone knew the extent of his happiness. During the last figure, when the ladies had to form the *moulinet*, his fingers clasped those of the Countess, and he fancied that, through the thin perfumed kid of her gloves, the young wife's grasp responded to his amorous appeal.

"Madame," said he, as the quadrille ended, "do not go back to the odious corner where you have been burying your face and your dress until now. Is admiration the only benefit you can obtain from the jewels that adorn your white neck and beautifully dressed hair? Come and take a turn through the rooms to enjoy the scene and yourself."

Madame de Soulanges yielded to her seducer, who thought she would be his all the more surely if he could only show her off. Side by side they walked two or three times amid the groups who crowded the rooms. The Comtesse de Soulanges, evidently uneasy, paused for an instant at each door before entering, only doing so after stretching her neck to look at all the men there. This alarm, which crowned the Baron's satisfaction, did not seem to be removed till he said to her, "Make yourself easy; *he* is not here."

They thus made their way to an immense picture gallery in a wing of the mansion, where their eyes could feast in anticipation on the splendid display of a collation prepared for three hundred persons. As supper was about to begin, Martial led the Countess to an oval boudoir looking on to the garden, where the rarest flowers and a few shrubs made a scented bower under bright blue hangings. The murmurs of the festivity here died away. The Countess, at first startled, refused firmly to follow the young man; but, glancing in a mirror, she no doubt assured herself that they could be seen, for she seated herself on an ottoman with a fairly good grace. "This room is charming," said she, admiring the sky blue hangings looped with pearls.

"All here is love and delight!" said the Baron, with deep emotion.

In the mysterious light which prevailed he looked at the Countess, and detected on her gently agitated face an expression of uneasiness, modesty, and eagerness which enchanted him. The young lady smiled, and this smile seemed to put an end to the struggle of feeling surging in her heart; in the most insinuating way she took her adorer's left hand, and drew from his finger the ring on which she had fixed her eyes.

"What a fine diamond!" she exclaimed in the artless tone of a young girl betraying the incitement of a first temptation.

Martial, troubled by the Countess's involuntary but intoxicating touch, like a caress, as she drew off the ring, looked at her with eyes as glittering as the gem.

"Wear it," he said, "in memory of this hour, and for the love of—"

She was looking at him with such rapture that he did not end the sentence; he kissed her hand.

"You give it me?" she said, looking much astonished.

"I wish I had the whole world to offer you!"

"You are not joking?" she went on, in a voice husky with too great satisfaction.

"Will you accept only my diamond?"

"You will never take it back?" she insisted.

"Never."

She put the ring on her finger. Martial, confident of coming happiness, was about to put his hand round her waist, but she suddenly rose, and said in a clear voice, without any agitation: "I accept the diamond, Monsieur, with the less scruple because it belongs to me."

The Baron was speechless.

"Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my dressing-table, and told me he had lost it."

"You are mistaken, Madame," said Martial, nettled. "It was given me by Madame de Vaudremont."

"Precisely so," said she with a smile. "My husband borrowed this ring of me, he gave it to her, she made it a

present to you; my ring has made a little journey, that is all. This ring will perhaps tell me all I do not know, and teach me the secret of always pleasing.—Monsieur," she went on, "if it had not been my own, you may be sure I should not have risked paying so dear for it; for a young woman, it is said, is in danger with you. But, you see," and she touched a spring within the ring, "here is M. de Soulanges' hair."

She fled into the crowded rooms so swiftly that it seemed useless to try to follow her; besides, Martial, utterly confounded, was in no mood to carry the adventure further. The Countess's laugh found an echo in the boudoir, where the young coxcomb now perceived, between two shrubs, the Colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, both laughing heartily.

"Will you have my horse, to ride after your prize?" said the Colonel.

The Baron took the banter poured upon him by Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet with a good grace, which secured their silence as to the events of the evening, when his friend exchanged his charger for a rich and pretty young wife.

As the Comtesse de Soulanges drove across Paris from the Chaussée d'Antin to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was a prey to many alarms. Before leaving the Hotel Gondreville she went through all the rooms, but found neither her aunt nor her husband, who had gone away without her. Frightful suspicions then tortured her ingenuous mind. A silent witness of her husband's torments since the day when Madame de Vaudremont had chained him to her car, she had confidently hoped that repentance would ere long restore her husband to her. It was with unspeakable repugnance that she had consented to the scheme plotted by her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and at this moment she feared she had made a mistake.

The evening's experience had saddened her innocent

soul. Alarmed at first by the Count's look of suffering and dejection, she had become more so on seeing her rival's beauty, and the corruption of society had gripped her heart. As she crossed the Pont Royal she threw away the desecrated hair at the back of the diamond, given to her once as a token of the purest affection. She wept as she remembered the bitter grief to which she had so long been a victim, and shuddered more than once as she reflected that the duty of a woman, who wishes for peace in her home, compels her to bury sufferings so keen as hers at the bottom of her heart, and without a complaint.

"Alas!" thought she, "what can women do when they do not love? What is the fount of their indulgence? I cannot believe that, as my aunt tells me, reason is all-sufficient to maintain them in such devotion."

She was still sighing when her manservant let down the handsome carriage-step down which she flew into the hall of her house. She rushed precipitately upstairs, and when she reached her room was startled by seeing her husband sitting by the fire.

"How long is it, my dear, since you have gone to balls without telling me beforehand?" he asked in a broken voice. "You must know that a woman is always out of place without her husband. You compromised yourself strangely by remaining in the dark corner where you had ensconced yourself."

"Oh, my dear, good Léon," said she in a coaxing tone, "I could not resist the happiness of seeing you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to this ball, and I was very happy there!"

This speech disarmed the Count's looks of their assumed severity, for he had been blaming himself while dreading his wife's return, no doubt fully informed at the ball of an infidelity he had hoped to hide from her; and, as is the way of lovers conscious of their guilt, he tried, by being the first to find fault, to escape her just anger. Happy in seeing her husband smile, and in finding him at this hour in a room

whither of late he had come more rarely, the Countess looked at him so tenderly that she blushed and cast down her eyes. Her clemency enraptured Soulanges all the more, because this scene followed on the misery he had endured at the ball. He seized his wife's hand and kissed it gratefully. Is not gratitude often a part of love?

"Hortense, what is that on your finger that has hurt my lip so much?" asked he, laughing.

"It is my diamond which you said you had lost, and which I have found."

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont, in spite of the mutual understanding in which they had lived for a few minutes, for she was one of the victims of the terrible fire which sealed the fame of the ball given by the Austrian ambassador on the occasion of Napoleon's marriage with the daughter of the Emperor Joseph II.

July, 1829.

THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS

Dedicated to the Comtesse Clara Maffei

IN THE MONTH of September, 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only child of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Polish exile.

I allow myself to spell the names as they are pronounced, to spare the reader the sight of the fortifications of consonants by which, in the Slav languages, the vowels are protected, no doubt to secure them against loss, seeing how few they are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had dissipated almost the whole of one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly owed his alliance with a Mademoiselle de Ronquerolles. Hence Clémentine had for her uncle, on her mother's side, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and for her aunt Madame de Sérizy. On her father's side she possessed another uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, the younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had grown rich by speculations in land and houses.

The Marquis de Ronquerolles was so unhappy as to lose both his children during the visitation of cholera. Madame de Sérizy's only son, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed in Africa at the fight by the Macta. In these days rich families run the risk of ruining their children if they have too many, or of becoming extinct if they have but one or two, a singular result of the Civil Code not foreseen by Napoleon. Thus, by accident, and in spite of Monsieur

du Rouvre's reckless extravagances for Florine, one of the most charming of Paris actresses, Clémentine had become an heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most accomplished diplomats of the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed that, to rescue their fortunes from the Marquis's clutches, they would leave them to their niece, to whom they each promised ten thousand francs a year on her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Pole, though a refugee, cost the French Government absolutely nothing. Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, connected with most of the princely houses of Germany, with the Sapiéhas, the Radziwills, the Mniszechs, the Rzewuskis, the Czartoryskis, the Leszinskis, the Lubomirskis, in short, all the great Sarmatian *skis*. But a knowledge of heraldry was not a strong point in France under Louis Philippe, and such nobility could be no recommendation to the *bourgeoisie* then in power. Besides, when, in 1833, Adam made his appearance on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati's, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a man who, having lost his political prospects, falls back on his vices and his love of pleasure. He was taken for a student.

The Polish nationality, as the result of an odious Government reaction, had fallen as low as the Republicans had tried to think it high. The strange struggle of Movement against Resistance—two words which thirty years hence will be inexplicable—made a farce of what ought to have been so worthy: the name, that is, of a vanquished nation to which France gave hospitality, for which entertainments were devised, for which every one danced or sang by subscription; a nation, in short, which at the time when, in 1796, Europe was fighting France, had offered her six thousand men, and such men!

Do not conclude from this that I mean to represent the Emperor Nicholas as being in the wrong as regards Poland, or Poland as regards the Emperor Nicholas. In the first

place, it would be a silly thing enough to slip a political discussion into a tale which ought to interest or to amuse. Besides, Russia and Poland were equally right: one for aiming at unity of empire, the other for desiring to be free again. It may be said, in passing, that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of manners instead of beating her with weapons; thus imitating the Chinese, who at last Chinesified the Tartars, and who, it is to be hoped, will do the same by the English. Poland ought to have *polished* the Russians; Poniatowski had tried it in the least temperate district of the Empire. But that gentleman was a misunderstood king—all the more so because he did not perhaps understand himself.

How was it possible not to hate the poor people who were the cause of the horrible deceit committed on the occasion of the review when all Paris was eager to rescue Poland? People affected to regard the Poles as allies of the Republican party, forgetting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Thenceforth the party of wealth poured ignoble contempt on the Pole, who had been deified but a few days since. The wind of a riot has always blown the Parisians round from north to south under every form of government. This weathercock temper of Paris opinion must be remembered if we would understand how, in 1835, the name of Pole was a word of ridicule among the race who believe themselves to be the wittiest and politest in the world, and its central luminary, in a city which, at this day, wields the sceptre of art and literature.

There are, alas! two types of Polish refugees—the republican Pole, the son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole, of the party led by Prince Czartoryski. These two kinds of Pole are as fire and water, but why blame them? Are not such divisions always to be observed among refugees, whatever nation they belong to, and no matter what country they go to? They carry their country and their hatreds with them. At Brussels two French émigré priests expressed the greatest aversion for each other; and when one of them was asked

his reasons, he replied, pointing to his companion in misery, "He is a Jansenist!" Dante, in his exile, would gladly have stabbed any adversary of the "Bianchi." In this lies the reason of the attacks made on the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski by the French radicals, and that of the disapproval shown to a section of the Polish emigrants by the Cæsars of the counter and the Alexanders by letters patent.

In 1834 Adam Mitgislas Laginski was the butt of Parisian witticisms.—"He is a nice fellow though he is a Pole," said Rastignac.—"All the Poles are great lords," said Maxime de Trailles, "but this one pays his gambling debts; I begin to think that he must have had an estate."

And without offence to the exiles, it may be remarked that the levity, the recklessness, the fluidity of the Sarmatian character justified the calumnies of the Parisians, who, indeed, in similar circumstances, would be exactly like the Poles. The French aristocracy, so admirably supported by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly made no equivalent return to those who were forced to emigrate in 1832. We must have the melancholy courage to say that, in this, the Faubourg Saint-Germain remains Poland's debtor.

Was Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer? The problem long remained unsolved. Diplomatic circles, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence observed by the Emperor Nicholas, who at that time counted every Polish émigré as dead. The Tuileries, and most of those who took their cue from thence, gave an odious proof of this characteristic policy dignified by the name of prudence. A Russian prince, with whom they had smoked many cigars at the time of the emigration, was ignored because, as it seemed, he had fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas.

Thus placed between the prudence of the Court and that of diplomatic circles, Poles of good family lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis*, or frequented certain drawing-rooms which served as neutral territory for every variety of opinion. In a city of pleasure like Paris,

where amusement is to be had in every rank, Polish recklessness found twice as many pretexts as it needed for leading a dissipated bachelor life. Besides, it must be said, Adam had against him at first both his appearance and his manners.

There are two types of Pole, as there are two types of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not a beauty, she is horribly ugly—and Count Adam belongs to the second category. His face is small, somewhat sour, and looks as if it had been squeezed in a vise. His short nose, fair hair, red mustaches and beard, give him the expression of a goat; all the more so because he is short and thin, and his eyes, tinged with dingy yellow, startle you by the oblique leer which Virgil's line has made famous. How is it that, in spite of such unfavorable conditions, he has such exquisite manners and style? The solution of this mystery is given by his dress, that of a finished dandy, and by the education he owes to his mother, a Radziwill. If his courage carries him to the point of rashness, his mind is not above the current and trivial pleasantries of Paris conversation; still, he does not often find a young fellow who is his superior among men of fashion. These young men nowadays talk far too much of horses, income, taxes, and deputies for French conversation to be what it once was. Wit needs leisure, and certain inequalities of position. Conversation is better perhaps at Petersburg and at Vienna than it is in Paris. Equals need no subtleties; they tell each other everything straight out, just as it is. Hence the ironical laughers of Paris could scarcely discern a man of family in a light-hearted student, as he seemed, who in talking passed carelessly from one subject to another, who pursued amusement with all the more frenzy because he had just escaped from great perils, and who, having left the country where his family was known, thought himself at liberty to lead an irresponsible life without risking a loss of consideration.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought a large house in the Rue de la Pépinière. Six months later it was on as handsome a footing as the richest houses in Paris. Just at the

time when Laginski was beginning to be taken seriously, he saw Clémentine at the Italian opera, and fell in love with her. A year later, he married her. Madame d'Espard's circle set the fashion of approval. Mothers of families then learned, too late, that, ever since the year 900, the Laginskis had ranked with the most illustrious families of the North. By a stroke of prudence, most unlike a Pole, the young Count's mother had, at the beginning of the rebellion, mortgaged her estates for an immense sum advanced by two Jewish houses, and invested in the French funds. Count Adam Laginski had an income of more than eighty thousand francs. This put an end to the astonishment expressed in some drawing-rooms at the rashness of Madame de Sérizy, of old de Ronquerolles, and of the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to their niece's mad passion.

As usual, the world rushed from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, Count Adam became the fashion, and Clémentine Laginska one of the queens of Paris. Madame de Laginska, at the present time, is one of the charming group of young married women among whom shine Mesdames de l'Estorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the very flower of Paris society, who live high above the parvenus, bourgeois, and wire-pullers of recent politics.

This preamble was needful to define the sphere in which was carried through one of those sublime efforts, less rare than the detractors of the present time imagine—pearls hidden in rough shells, and lost in the depths of that abyss, that ocean, that never-resting tide called the World—the Age—Paris, London, or Petersburg—whichever you will.

If ever the truth that architecture is the expression of the manners of a race was fully demonstrated, is it not since the revolution of 1830, under the reign of the House of Orleans? Great fortunes have shrunk in France, and the majestic mansions of our fathers are constantly being demolished and replaced by a sort of tenement houses, in which a peer of France of July dwells on the third floor, over some

newly-enriched empiric. Styles are mingled in confusion. As there is no longer any Court, any nobility to set a "tone," no harmony is to be seen in the productions of art. On the other hand, architecture has never found more economical tricks for imitating what is genuine and thorough, never displayed more ingenuity and resource in arrangement. Ask an artist to deal with a strip of the garden of an old "hotel" now destroyed, and he will build you a little Louvre crushed under its ornamentation; he will give you a courtyard, stables, and, if you insist, a garden; inside he contrives such a number of little rooms and corridors, and cheats the eye so effectually, that you fancy yourself comfortable; in fact, there are so many bedrooms that a ducal retinue can live and move in what was only the bake-house of a president of a law court.

The Comtesse Laginska's house is one of these modern structures, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. To the right of the courtyard are the servants' quarters, balanced on the left by the stables and coach-houses. The porter's lodge stands between two handsome gates. The chief luxury of this house consists in a delightful conservatory at the end of a boudoir on the ground floor, where all the beautiful reception rooms are. It was a philanthropist driven out of England who built this architectural gem, constructed the conservatory, planned the garden, varnished the doors, paved the outbuildings with brick, filled the windows with green glass, and realized a vision like that—in due proportion—of George IV. at Brighton. The inventive, industrious, and ready Paris artisan had carved his doors and window-frames; his ceilings were imitated from those of the Middle Ages or of Venetian palaces, and there was a lavish outlay of marble slabs in external panelling. Steinbock and François Souchet had carved the cornices of the doors and chimney-shelves; Schinner had painted the ceilings with the brush of a master. The wonders of the stairs—marble as white as a woman's arm—defied those of the Hotel Rothschild.

In consequence of the disturbances, the price of this folly

was not more than eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman this was giving it away. All this splendor, called princely by people who do not know what a real prince is, stood in the garden of a contractor—a Crœsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels a bankrupt after a sudden convulsion of the Bourse. The Englishman died at Paris—died of Paris—for to many people Paris is a disease; sometimes it is several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a perfect horror of the nabob's little house—this philanthropist had been a dealer in opium. The virtuous widow ordered that the scandalous property should be sold just at the time when the disturbances made peace doubtful on any terms. Count Adam took advantage of the opportunity; and you shall be told how it happened, for nothing could be less consonant with his lordly habits.

Behind this house, built of stone fretted like a melon, spreads the green velvet of an English lawn, shaded at the further end by an elegant clump of exotic trees, among which rises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bells and pendent gilt eggs. The greenhouse and its fantastic decorations screen the outer wall on the south side. The other wall, opposite the green house, is hung with creepers grown in arcades over poles and cross-beams painted green. This meadow, this realm of flowers, these gravelled paths, this mimic forest, these aerial trellises cover an area of about twenty-five square perches, of which the present value would be four hundred thousand francs, as much as a real forest. In the heart of this silence won from Paris, birds sing; there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, chaffinches, and numbers of sparrows. The conservatory is a vast flower-bed, where the air is loaded with perfume, and where you may walk in winter as though summer was blazing with all its fires. The means by which an atmosphere is produced at will of the tropics, China or Italy, are ingeniously concealed from view. The pipes in which the boiling water circulates—the steam, hot air, what not—are covered with soil, and look like garlands of growing flowers.

The boudoir is spacious. On a small plot of ground the miracle wrought by the Paris fairy called Architecture is to produce everything on a large scale. The young Countess's boudoir was the pride of the artist to whom Count Adam intrusted the task of redecorating the house. To sin there would be impossible, there are too many pretty trifles. Love would not know where to alight amid work-tables of Chinese carving, where the eye can find thousands of droll little figures wrought in the ivory—the outcome of the toil of two families of Chinese artists; vases of burned topaz mounted on filigree stands; mosaics that invite to theft; Dutch pictures, such as Schinner now paints again; angels imagined as Steinbock conceives of them (but does not always work them out himself); statuettes executed by geniuses pursued by creditors (the true interpretation of the Arab myths); sublime first sketches by our greatest artists; fronts of carved chests let into the wainscot, and alternating with the inventions of Indian embroidery; gold-colored curtains draped over the doors from an architrave of black oak wrought with the swarming figures of a hunting scene; chairs and tables worthy of Madame de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, and so forth. And finally, as a crowning touch, all this splendor, seen under a softened light filtering in through lace curtains, looks all the more beautiful. On a marble slab, among some antiques, a lady's whip, with a handle carved by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, shows that the Countess is fond of riding.

Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of property to divert the eye, as though ennui threatened to invade the most restless and unresting society in the world. Why is there nothing individual, intimate, nothing to invite revery and repose?—Why?—Because no one is sure of the morrow, and every one enjoys life as a prodigal spends a life-interest.

One morning Clémentine affected a meditative air, as she lounged on one of those deep siesta chairs from which we cannot bear to rise, so cleverly has the upholsterer who invented them contrived to fit them to the curves of laziness and the comfort of the *Dolce far niente*. The doors to the

conservatory were open, admitting the scent of vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics. The young wife watched Adam, who was smoking an elegant nargile, the only form of pipe she allowed in this room. Over the other door, curtains, caught back by handsome ropes, showed two magnificent rooms beyond: one in white and gold, resembling that of the Hotel Forbin-Janson, the other in the taste of the Renaissance. The dining-room, unrivalled in Paris by any but that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a corridor, with a ceiling and walls decorated in a medieval style. This corridor is reached, on the courtyard front, through a large anteroom, through whose glass door the splendor of the stairs is seen.

The Count and Countess had just breakfasted; the sky was a sheet of blue without a cloud; the month of April was drawing to a close. The household had already known two years of happiness, and now, only two days since, Clémentine had discovered in her home something resembling a secret, a mystery. A Pole, let it be repeated to his honor, is generally weak in the presence of a woman; he is so full of tenderness that, in Poland, he becomes her inferior; and though Polish women are admirable creatures, a Pole is even more quickly routed by a Parisienne. Hence, Count Adam, pressed hard with questions, had not enough artless cunning to sell his secret dear to his wife. With a woman there is always something to be got for a secret; and she likes you the better for it, as a rogue respects an honest man whom he has failed to take in. The Count, more ready with his sword than with his tongue, only stipulated that he should not be required to answer till he had finished his nargile full of *tombaki*.

"When we were travelling," said she, "you replied to every difficulty by saying, 'Paz will see to that!' You never wrote to anybody but Paz. On my return, every one refers me to *the Captain*. I want to go out.—The Captain! Is there a bill to be paid?—The Captain. If my horse's pace is rough, they will speak to Captain Paz. In short, here I

feel as if it were a game of dominoes; everywhere Paz! I hear no one talked of but Paz, but I can never see Paz. What is Paz? Let our Paz be brought to see me."

"Then is not everything as it ought to be?" said the Count, relinquishing the mouthpiece of his nargile.

"Everything is so quite what it ought to be, that if we had two hundred thousand francs a year, we should be ruined by living in the way we do with a hundred and ten thousand," said she. She pulled the bell-handle embroidered in tent-stitch, a marvel of skill. A manservant dressed like a Minister at once appeared.

"Tell Monsieur le Capitaine Paz that I wish to speak to him," said she.

"If you fancy you will find anything out in that way—" said Count Adam with a smile.

It may be useful to say that Adam and Clémentine, married in December, 1835, after spending the winter in Paris, had during 1836 travelled in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They returned home in November, and during the winter just past the Countess had for the first time received her friends, and then had discovered the existence—the almost speechless and unacknowledged but most useful presence—of a factotum whose person seemed to be invisible —this Captain Paz or Paç.

"Monsieur le Capitaine Paz begs Madame la Comtesse to excuse him; he is round at the stables, and in a dress which does not allow of his coming at this minute. But as soon as he is dressed Count Paz will come," said the manservant.

"Why, what was he doing?"

"He was showing Constantine how to groom the Countess's horse; the man did not do it to his mind," replied the servant.

The Countess looked at the man; he was quite serious, and took good care not to imply by a smile the comment which inferiors so often allow themselves on a superior who seems to have descended to their level.

"Ah, he was brushing down Cora?"

"You are not riding out this morning, Madame?" said the servant; but he got no answer, and went.

"Is he a Pole?" asked Clémentine of her husband, who bowed affirmatively.

Clémentine lay silent, examining Adam. Her feet, almost at full length on a cushion, her head in the attitude of a bird listening on the edge of its nest to the sounds of the grove, she would have seemed charming to the most blasé of men. Fair and slight, her hair curled *à l'Anglaise*, she looked like one of the almost fabulous figures in "Keepsakes," especially as she was wrapped in a morning gown of Persian silk, of which the thick folds did not so effectually disguise the graces of her figure and the slenderness of her waist as that they could not be admired through the thick covering of flowers and embroidery. As she crossed the brightly colored stuff over her chest, the hollow of her throat remained visible, the white skin contrasting in tone with the handsome lace trimming over the shoulders. Her eyes, fringed with black lashes, emphasized the expression of curiosity that puckered a pretty mouth. On her well-formed brow were traced the characteristic curves of the Paris woman, wilful, light-hearted, well educated, but invulnerable to vulgar temptations. Her hands, almost transparent, hung from each arm of her deep chair; the taper fingers, curved at the tips, showed nails like pink almonds that caught the light.

Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, gazing at her with a look which conjugal satiety had not yet made lukewarm. This slim little Countess had known how to be mistress in her own house, for she scarcely acknowledged Adam's admiration. In the glances she stole at him there was perhaps a dawning consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne to this spruce, lean, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the Count, hearing a step that rang in the corridor.

The Countess saw a tall, handsome man come in, well

built, bearing in his features the marks of the grief which comes of strength and misfortune. Paz had dressed hastily in one of those tightly fitting coats, fastened by braid straps and oval buttons, which used to be called *polonaises*. Thick, black hair, but ill-kempt, covered his squarely-shaped head, and Clémentine could see his broad forehead as shiny as a piece of marble, for he held his peaked cap in his hand. That hand was like the hand of the Hercules carrying the infant Mercury. Robust health bloomed in a face equally divided by a large Roman nose, which reminded Clémentine of the handsome Trasteverini. A black silk stock put a finishing touch of martial appearance to this mystery of near six feet high, with jet-black eyes as lustrous as an Italian's. The width of his full trousers, hiding all but the toes of his boots, showed that Paz still was faithful to the fashions of Poland. Certainly, to a romantic woman, there must have been something burlesque in the violent contrast observable between the Captain and the Count, between the little Pole with his narrow frame and this fine soldier, between the carpet-knight and the knight servitor.

"Good-morning, Adam," he said to the Count with familiarity.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what way he could serve her.

"Then you are Laginski's friend?" asked the lady.

"For life and death," replied Paz, on whom the young Count shed his most affectionate smile, as he exhaled his last fragrant puff of smoke.

"Well, then, why do you not eat with us? Why did you not accompany us to Italy and to Switzerland? Why do you hide yourself so as to avoid the thanks I owe you for the constant services you do us?" said the young Countess, with a sort of irritation, but without the slightest feeling.

In fact, she detected a kind of volunteer slavery on the part of Paz. At that time such an idea was inseparable from a certain disdain for a socially amphibious creature, a being at once secretary and bailiff, neither wholly bailiff

nor wholly secretary, some poor relation—inconvenient as a friend.

"The fact is, Countess," he replied with some freedom, "that no thanks are owing to me. I am Adam's friend, and I find my pleasure in taking charge of his interests."

"And is it for your pleasure too that you remain standing?" said Count Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the doorway.

"I remember having seen you on the occasion of our marriage, and sometimes in the courtyard," said the lady; "but why do you, a friend of Adam's, place yourself in a position of inferiority?"

"The opinion of the Paris world is to me a matter of indifference," said he. "I live for myself, or, if you choose, for you two."

"But the opinion of the world as regards my husband's friend cannot be a matter of indifference to me—"

"Oh, Madame, the world is easily satisfied by one word: Eccentric—say that."

After a short pause he asked, "Do you propose going out?"

"Will you come to the Bois?" said the Countess.

"With pleasure," and so saying Paz bowed and went out.

"What a good soul! He is as simple as a child," said Adam.

"Tell me now how you became friends," said Clémentine.

"Paz, my dearest, is of a family as old, as noble, and as illustrious as our own. At the time of the fall of the Pazzi a member of that family escaped from Florence into Poland, where he settled with some little fortune, and founded the family of the Paz, on which the title of Count was conferred.

"This family, having distinguished itself in the days of our royal republic, grew rich. The cutting from the tree felled in Italy grew with such vigor that there are several branches of the house of the Counts Paz. It will not, therefore, surprise you to be told that there are rich and poor

members of the family. Our Paz is the son of a poor branch. As an orphan, with no fortune but his sword, he served under the Grandduke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing—three reasons for fighting well. In the last skirmish, believing his men were following him, he rushed on a Russian battery, and was taken prisoner. I was there. This feat of courage roused my blood. 'Let us go and fetch him!' cried I to my horsemen. We charged the battery like freebooters, and I rescued Paz, I being the seventh. We were twenty when we set out, and eight when we came back, including Paz.

"When Warsaw was betrayed we had to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance Paz and I found ourselves together at the same hour and in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor Captain arrested by some Prussians, who at that time had made themselves bloodhounds for the Russians. When one has fished a man out of the Styx, one gets attached to him. This new danger threatening Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, intending to be of service to him. Two men can sometimes escape when one alone is lost. Thanks to my name and some family connection with those on whom our fate depended—for we were then in the power of the Prussians—my flight was winked at. I got my dear Captain through as a common soldier and a servant of my house, and we succeeded in reaching Dantzic. We stowed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for England, where we landed two months later.

"My mother had fallen ill in England, and awaited me there; Paz and I nursed her till her death, which was accelerated by the disasters to our cause.

"We then left England, and I brought Paz to France; in such adversities two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris with sixty-odd thousand francs a year, not to mention the remains of a sum derived from the sale of my

mother's diamonds and the family pictures, I wished to secure a living to Paz before giving myself up to the dissipations of Paris life. I had discerned some sadness in the captain's eyes, sometimes even a suppressed tear floated there. I had had opportunities of appreciating his soul, which is thoroughly noble, lofty, and generous. Perhaps it was painful to him to find himself bound by benefits to a man six years younger than himself without being able to repay him. I, careless and light-hearted as a boy, might ruin myself at play, or let myself be insnared by some woman; Paz and I might some day be sundered. Though I promised myself that I would always provide for all his needs, I foresaw many chances of forgetting, or being unable to pay Paz an allowance. In short, my angel, I wished to spare him the discomfort, the humiliation, the shame of having to ask me for money, or of seeking in vain for his comrade in some day of necessity. *Dunque*, one morning after breakfast, with our feet on the fire-dogs, each smoking his pipe, after many blushes, and with many precautions, till I saw he was looking at me quite anxiously, I held out to him a bond to bearer producing two thousand four hundred francs interest yearly—"

Clémentine rose, seated herself on Adam's knees, and putting her arm round his neck, kissed him on the brow, saying: "Dear heart, how noble I think you! And what did Paz say?"

"Thaddeus?" said the Count; "he turned pale and said nothing."

"Thaddeus—is that his name?"

"Yes.—Thaddeus folded up the paper and returned it to me, saying, 'I thought, Adam, that we were as one in life and death, and that we should never part; do you wish to see no more of me?'—'Oh,' said I, 'is that the way you take it? Well, then, say no more about it. If I am ruined, you will be ruined.'—Said he, 'You are not rich enough to live as a Laginski should; and do you not need a friend to take care of your concerns, who will be father and brother to you,

and a trusted confidant?' My dear girl, Paz, as he uttered the words, spoke with a calmness of tone and look which covered a motherly feeling, but which betrayed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a dog, and the friendship of a savage, always ready and always unassuming. On my honor! I took him in our Polish fashion, laying my hand on his shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. 'For life and death, then,' said I. 'All I have is yours, do just as you will.'

"It was he who found me this house for almost nothing. He sold my shares when they were high, and bought when they were low, and we purchased this hovel out of the difference. He is a connoisseur in horses, and deals in them so well that my stable has cost me very little, and yet I have the finest beasts and the prettiest turn-out in Paris. Our servants, old Polish soldiers whom he found, would pass through the fire for us. While I seem to be ruining myself, Paz keeps my house with such perfect order and economy that he has even made good some losses at play, the follies of a young man. My Thaddeus is as cunning as two Genoese, as keen for profit as a Polish Jew, as cautious as a good housekeeper. I have never been able to persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it has needed the gentle violence of friendship to induce him to come to the play when I was going alone, or to one of the dinners I was giving at an eating-house to a party of congenial companions. He does not like the life of drawing-rooms."

"Then what does he like?" asked Clémentine.

"He loves Poland, and weeps over her. His only extravagance has been money sent, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor exiles."

"Dear, how fond I shall be of that good fellow," said the Countess. "He seems to me as simple as everything that is truly great."

"All the pretty things you see here," said Adam, praising his friend with the most generous security, "have been found by Paz; he has bought them at sales, or by some

chance. Oh! he is keener at a bargain than a trader. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, it is because he has exchanged a good horse for a better. He lives in me; his delight is to see me well dressed in a dazzlingly smart carriage. He performs all the duties he imposes on himself without fuss or display. One night I had lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I to myself as I reached home. Paz gave me the sum, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me even by a look. This sigh checked me more than all the remonstrances of uncles, wives, or mothers in similar circumstances. 'You regret the money?' I asked him.—'Oh, not for you, nor for myself; no, I was only thinking that twenty poor relations of mine could have lived on it for a year.'

"The family of Paz, you understand, is quite equal to that of Laginski, and I have never regarded my dear Paz as an inferior. I have tried to be as magnanimous in my degree as he in his. I never go out or come in without going to Paz, as if he were my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus knows that at this day I would rush into danger to rescue him, as I have done twice before."

"That is not a small thing to say, my dear," remarked the Countess. "Devotion is a lightning-flash. Men devote themselves in war, but they no longer devote themselves in Paris."

"Well, then," said Adam, "for Paz I am always in war. Our two natures have preserved their asperities and their faults, but the mutual intimacy of our souls has tightened the bonds, already so close, of our friendship. A man may save his comrade's life, and kill him afterward if he finds him a bad companion; but we have gone through what makes friendship indissoluble. There is between us that constant exchange of pleasing impressions on both sides which makes friendship, from that point of view, a richer joy, perhaps, than love."

A pretty little hand shut the Count's mouth so suddenly that the movement was almost a blow.

"Yes, indeed, my darling," said he. "Friendship knows nothing of the bankruptcy of sentiment, the insolvency of pleasures. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives!"

"On both sides alike then," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Yes," said Adam. "While friendship can but increase. You need not pout. We, my angel, are as much friends as lovers; we, at least, I hope, have combined the two feelings in our happy marriage."

"I will explain to you what has made you two such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference in your lives arises from a difference in your tastes, and not from compulsory choice; from preference, and not from the necessity of position. So far as a man can be judged from a glimpse, and from what you tell me, in this instance the subaltern may at times be the superior."

"Oh! Paz is really my superior," replied Adam simply. "I have no advantage over him but that of luck."

His wife kissed him for this generous avowal.

"The perfect skill with which he conceals the loftiness of his soul is an immense superiority," the Count went on. "I say to him, 'You are a sly fellow; you have vast domains in your mind to which you retire.' He has a right to the title of Count Paz; in Paris he will only be called Captain."

"In short, a Florentine of the Middle Ages has resuscitated after three centuries," said the Countess. "There is something of Dante in him, and something of Michelangelo."

"Indeed, you are right; he is at heart a poet," replied Adam.

"And so I am married to two Poles," said the young Countess, with a gesture resembling that of a genius on the stage.

"Darling child!" said Adam, clasping Clémentine to him, "you would have distressed me very much if you had not liked my friend. We were both afraid of that, though he was delighted at my marrying. You will make him very

happy by telling him that you love him—oh! as an old friend."

"Then I will go to dress; it is fine, we will all three go out," said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

Paz led such an underground life that all the fashion of Paris wondered who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginska when they saw her driving to the Bois and back between him and her husband. During the drive Clémentine had insisted that Thaddeus was to dine with her. This whim of a despotic sovereign compelled the Captain to make an unwonted toilet. On returning from her drive Clémentine dressed with some coquettish care, in such a way as to produce an effect even on Adam as she entered the room where the two friends were awaiting her.

"Count Paz," said she, "we will go to the opera together."

It was said in the tone which from a woman conveys, "If you refuse, we shall quarrel."

"With pleasure, Madame," replied the Captain. "But as I have not a Count's fortune, call me Captain."

"Well, then, Captain, give me your arm," said she, taking it and leading him into the dining-room with a suggestion of the caressing familiarity which enraptures a lover.

The Countess placed the Captain next her, and he sat like a poor sub-lieutenant dining with a wealthy general. Paz left it to Clémentine to talk, listening to her with all the air of deference to a superior, contradicting her in nothing, and waiting for a positive question before making any reply. In short, to the Countess he seemed almost stupid, and her graces all fell flat before this icy gravity and diplomatic dignity. In vain did Adam try to rouse him by saying, "Come, cheer up, Captain. It might be supposed that you were not at home. You must have laid a bet that you would disconcert Clémentine?" Thaddeus remained heavy and half asleep.

When the three were alone at dessert the Captain explained that his life was planned diametrically unlike that

of other people; he went to bed at eight o'clock, and rose at daybreak; and he thus excused himself, saying he was very sleepy.

"My intention in taking you to the opera was only to amuse you, Captain; but do just as you please," said Clémentine, a little nettled.

"I will go," said Paz.

"Duprez is singing in 'William Tell,'" said Adam. "Would you prefer the 'Variétés'?"

The Captain smiled and rang the bell; the manservant appeared. "Tell Constantine," said Paz, "to take out the large carriage instead of the coupé.—We cannot sit comfor tably in it," he added, turning to the Count.

"A Frenchman would not have thought of that," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah, but we are Florentines transplanted to the North," replied Thaddeus, with a meaning and an expression which showed that his dulness at dinner had been assumed.

But by a very conceivable want of judgment, there was too great a contrast between the involuntary self-betrayal of this speech and the Captain's attitude during dinner. Clémentine examined him with one of those keen flashes by which a woman reveals at once her surprise and her observance. Thus, during the few minutes while they were taking their coffee in the drawing-room, silence reigned—an uncomfortable silence for Adam, who could not divine its cause. Clémentine no longer disturbed Thaddeus. The Captain, for his part, retired again into military rigidity, and came out of it no more, either on the way, or in the box, where he affected to be asleep.

"You see, Madame, that I am very dull company," said he, during the ballet in the last act of "William Tell." "Was I not right to 'stick to my last,' as the proverb says?"

"On my word, my dear Captain, you are neither a coxcomb nor a chatterbox; you are perhaps a Pole."

"Leave me then to watch over your pleasures," he re-

plied, "to take care of your fortune and your house; that is all I am good for."

"Tartufe! begone!" cried Adam, smiling. "My dear, he is full of heart, well informed—he could, if he chose, hold his own in any drawing-room. Clémentine, do not believe what his modesty tells you."

"Good-night, Countess. I have proved my willingness, and now will avail myself of your carriage to go to bed at once. I will send it back for you."

Clémentine bowed slightly, and let him go without replying.

"What a bear!" said she to the Count. "You are much, much nicer."

Adam pressed his wife's hand unseen.

"Poor, dear Thaddeus, he has endeavored to be a foil when many men would have tried to seem more attractive than I."

"Oh!" said she, "I am not sure that was not intentional; his behavior would have mystified an ordinary woman."

Half an hour later, while Boleslas the groom was calling "Gate," and the coachman, having turned the carriage to drive in, was waiting for the gates to be opened, Clémentine said to the Count:

"Where does the Captain roost?"

"Up there," said Adam, pointing to an elegantly constructed attic extending on both sides of the gateway with a window looking on to the street. "His rooms are over the coach-houses."

"And who lives in the other half?"

"No one as yet," replied Adam. "The other little suite, over the stables, will do for our children and their tutor."

"He is not in bed," said the Countess, seeing a light in the Captain's room when the carriage was under the pillared portico—copied from that at the Tuileries, and taking the place of the ordinary zinc awning painted to imitate striped ticking.

Paz, in his dressing-gown, and pipe in hand, was watch-

ing Clémentine as she disappeared into the hall. The day had been a cruel one to him. And this is the reason: Thaddeus had felt a fearful shock to his heart on the day when, Adam having taken him to the opera to pronounce his opinion, he first saw Mademoiselle du Rouvre; and again, when he saw her in the Maire's office and at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and recognized in her the woman whom a man must love to the exclusion of all others—for Don Juan himself preferred one among the *mille e tre!*

Hence Paz had strongly advocated the classical bridal tour after the wedding. Fairly easy all the time while Clémentine was absent, his tortures began again on the return of the happy couple. And this was what he was thinking as he inhaled his latakia from a cherry-stem pipe, six feet long, a gift from Adam: "Only I and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, may ever know how I love her! But how can I manage to avoid alike her love or her hatred?"

And he sat thinking, thinking, over this problem of the strategy of love.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus lived bereft of all joy in the midst of his pain. The triumphant cunning of this day was a source of secret satisfaction. Since the Count's return with his wife, day by day he felt ineffable happiness in seeing that he was necessary to the couple, who, but for him, would have rushed inevitably into ruin. What fortune can hold out against the extravagance of Paris life? Clémentine, brought up by a reckless father, knew nothing of household management, which nowadays the richest women and the highest in rank are obliged to undertake themselves. Who in these days can afford to keep a steward? Adam, on his part, as the son of one of the great Polish nobles who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, and who was incapable of husbanding the remains of one of the most enormous fortunes in Poland—where fortunes were enormous—was not of a temper to restrict either his own fancies or his wife's. If he had been alone, he

would probably have ruined himself before his marriage. Paz had kept him from gambling on the Bourse, and does not that say all?

Consequently, when he found that, in spite of himself, he was in love with Clémentine, Paz had not the choice of leaving the house and travelling to forget his passion. Gratitude, the clew to the mystery of his life, held him to the house where he alone could act as man of business to this heedless couple. Their long absence made him hope for a calmer spirit; but the Countess came back more than ever lovely, having acquired that freedom of thought which marriage confers on the Paris woman, and displaying all the charms of a young wife, with the indefinable something which comes of happiness, or of the independence allowed her by a man as trusting, as chivalrous, and as much in love as Adam was.

The consciousness of being the working hub of this magnificent house, the sight of Clémentine stepping out of her carriage on her return from a party, or setting out in the morning for the Bois de Boulogne, a glimpse of her on the Boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its nest of leaves, filled poor Thaddeus with deep, mysterious ecstasies which blossomed at the bottom of his heart without the slightest trace appearing in his features. How, during these five months, should the Countess ever have seen the Captain? He hid from her, concealing the care he took to keep out of her way.

Nothing is so near divine love as a hopeless love. Must not a man have some depth of soul thus to devote himself in silence and obscurity? This depth, where lurks the pride of a father—or of God—enshrines the worship of love for love's sake, as power for power's sake was the watchword of the Jesuits; a sublime kind of avarice, since it is perennially generous, and modelled indeed on the mysterious Being of the first principles of the world. Is not their result Nature? And Nature is an enchantress; she belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover; but is not the

Cause superior to Nature in the sight of certain privileged souls, and some stupendous thinkers? The Cause is God. In that sphere of Causes dwelt the spirits of Newton, of Laplace, of Kepler, of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, of the true poets and saints of the second century of our era, of Saint Theresa of Spain and the sublime mystics. Every human emotion contains some analogy with the frame of mind in which the Effect is neglected in favor of the Cause, and Thaddeus has risen to the height whence all things look different. Abandoned to the unspeakable joys of creative energy, Thaddeus was, in love, what we recognize as greatest in the records of genius.

"No, she is not altogether deceived," thought he, as he watched the smoke curl from his pipe. "She might involve me in an irremediable quarrel with Adam if she spited me; and if she should flirt to torment me, what would become of me?"

The fatuity of this hypothesis was so unlike the Captain's modest nature, and his somewhat German shyness, that he was vexed with himself for its having occurred to him, and went to bed determined to await events before taking any decisive steps.

Next morning Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and made no remark on his disobedience. That day, as it happened, was her day for being "at home," and this, with her, demanded a royal display. She did not observe the absence of Captain Paz, on whom devolved all the arrangements for these great occasions.

"Well and good!" said Paz to himself, as he heard the carriages rumble out at two in the morning; "the Countess was only prompted by a Parisian's whim or curiosity."

So the Captain fell back into his regular routine, disturbed for a day by this incident. Clémentine, diverted by the details of life in Paris, seemed to have forgotten Paz. For do you suppose that it is a mere trifle to reign over this inconstant city? Do you imagine, by any chance that a woman risks nothing but her fortune at that absorbing game?

The winter is to a woman of fashion what, of yore, a campaign was to the soldiers of the Empire. What a work of art—of genius—is a costume or a head-dress created to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate woman wears her hard and dazzling armor of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine in the evening till two or often three in the morning. She eats little, to attract the eye by her slender shape; she cheats the hunger that attacks her during the evening with debilitating cups of tea, sweet cakes, heating ices, or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must submit to the commands of vanity. She awakes late, and thus everything is in contradiction to the laws of Nature, and Nature is ruthless.

No sooner is she up than the woman of fashion begins to dress for the morning, planning her dress for the afternoon. Must she not receive and pay visits, and go to the Bois on horseback or in her carriage? Must she not always be practicing the drill of smiles, and fatigue her brain in inventing compliments which shall seem neither stale nor studied? And it is not every woman who succeeds. And then you are surprised, when you see a young woman, whom the world has welcomed in her freshness, faded and blighted at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country are barely enough to heal the wounds inflicted by the winter. We hear nothing talked of but dyspepsia and strange maladies, unknown to women who devote themselves to their household. Formerly a woman was sometimes seen; now she is perpetually on the stage.

Clémentine had to fight her way; she was beginning to be quoted, and amid the cares of this struggle between her and her rivals there was hardly a place for love of her husband! Thaddeus might well be forgotten. However, a month later, in May, a few days before her departure to stay at Ronquerolles in Burgundy, as she was returning from her drive she saw Thaddeus in a side alley of the Champs-Elysées—Thaddeus, carefully dressed, and in raptures at seeing his Countess so beautiful in her phaeton,

with champing horses, splendid liveries; in short, the dear people he admired so much.

"There is the Captain," said she to Adam.

"Happy fellow!" said the Count. "These are his great treats! There is not a smarter turn-out than ours, and he delights in seeing everybody envying us our happiness. You have never noticed him before, but he is there almost every day."

"What can he be thinking of?" said Clémentine.

"He is thinking at this moment that the winter has cost a great deal, and that we shall save a little by staying with your old uncle Ronquerolles," said Adam.

The Countess had the carriage stopped in front of Paz, and desired him to take the seat by her side in the carriage. Thaddeus turned as red as a cherry.

"I shall poison you," he said; "I have just been smoking cigars."

"And does not Adam poison me?" she replied quickly.

"Yes, but he is Adam," replied the Captain.

"And why should not Thaddeus enjoy the same privilege?" said the Countess with a smile.

This heavenly smile had a power which was too much for his heroic resolutions; he gazed at Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic expression of his gratitude—that of a man who lived solely by gratitude. The Countess folded her arms in her shawl, leaned back pensively against the cushions, crumpling the feathers of her handsome bonnet, and gazed out at the passers-by. This flash from a soul so noble, and hitherto so resigned, appealed to her feelings. What, after all, was Adam's great merit? Was it not natural that he should be brave and generous? But the Captain!—Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, an immense superiority over Adam. What sinister thoughts distressed the Countess when she once more observed the contrast between the fine, complete physical nature which distinguished Thaddeus and the frail constitution which, in her husband, be-

trayed the inevitable degeneration of aristocratic families which are so mad as to persist in intermarrying! But the Devil alone knew these thoughts, for the young wife sat with vague meditation in her eyes, saying nothing till they reached home.

"You must dine with us, or I shall be angry with you for having disobeyed me," said she as she went in. "You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know the obligations you feel to him, but I also know all we owe to you. In return for two impulses of generosity which are so natural, you are generous at all hours and day after day.—My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt de Sérizy; dress at once," she said, pressing the hand he offered to help her out of the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his room to dress, his heart at once rejoicing and oppressed by an agonizing flutter. He came down at the last moment, and all through dinner played his part of a soldier fit for nothing but to fulfil the duties of a steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe. His look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the cleverest of ambassadors next to Talleyrand, and who served de Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the high merits of Count Paz, who had so modestly made himself his friend's steward.

"And how is it that this is the first time I have ever seen Count Paz?" asked the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

"Eh! he is very sly and underhand," replied Clémentine, with a look at Paz to desire him to change his demeanor.

Alas! it must be owned, at the risk of making the Captain less interesting to the reader, Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of strong temper. He owed his apparent superiority to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and isolation at Warsaw he had read and educated himself, had compared and thought much; but the creative power which makes a great man he did not possess—can it ever be acquired? Paz was great only through his feelings, and there could rise to the sublime; but in the sphere

of sentiment, being a man of action rather than of ideas, he kept his thoughts to himself. His thoughts, then, did nothing but eat his heart out.

And what, after all, is an unuttered thought?

At Clémentine's speech the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged glances, with a side look at their niece, Count Adam, and Paz. It was one of those swift dramas which are played only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two parts of the world—excepting at all courts—can the eyes say as much. To infuse into the eye all the power of the soul, to give it the full value of speech and throw a poem or a drama into a single flash, excessive servitude or excessive liberty is needed.

Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and the Countess did not perceive this flash of observation between a past coquette and an old diplomatist; but Paz, like a faithful dog, understood its forecast. It was, you must remember, an affair of two seconds. To describe the hurricane that ravaged the Captain's heart would be too elaborate for these days.

"What! the uncle and aunt already fancy that she perhaps loves me?" said he to himself. "My happiness then depends only on my own audacity.—And Adam! . . ."

Ideal love and mere desire, both quite as potent as friendship and gratitude, rent his soul, and for a moment love had the upper hand. This poor heroic lover longed to have his day! Paz became witty; he intended to please, and in answer to some question from Monsieur de Ronquerolles he sketched in grand outlines the Polish rebellion. Thus, at dessert, Paz saw Clémentine hanging on his lips, regarding him as a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after sacrificing a third of his immense fortune, had taken the risks of exile. At nine o'clock, having taken coffee, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead and took leave, carrying off Count Adam with an assertion of authority, and leaving the Marquis du Rouvre and M. de Ronquerolles, who withdrew ten minutes later. Paz and Clémentine were left together.

"I will bid you good-night, Madame," said Thaddeus; "you will join them at the opera."

"No," replied she. "I do not care for dancing, and they are giving an odious ballet this evening, 'The Revolt of the Seraglio.'"

There was a moment's silence.

"Two years ago Adam would not have gone without me," she went on, without looking at Paz.

"He loves you to distraction—" Thaddeus began.

"Oh! it is because he loves me to distraction that by to-morrow he will perhaps have ceased to love me!" exclaimed the Countess.

"The women of Paris are inexplicable," said Thaddeus. "When they are loved to distraction, they want to be loved rationally; when they are loved rationally, they accuse a man of not knowing how to love."

"And they are always right, Thaddeus," she replied with a smile. "I know Adam well; I owe him no grudge for it; he is fickle, and, above all, a great gentleman; he will always be pleased to have me for his wife, and will never thwart me in any of my tastes; but—"

"What marriage was ever without a but?" said Thaddeus gently, trying to give the Countess's thoughts another direction.

The least conceited man would perhaps have had the thought which nearly drove this lover mad: "If I do not tell her that I love her," said he to himself, "I am an idiot!"

There was silence between these two, one of those terrible pauses which seem bursting with thoughts. The Countess fixed a covert gaze on Paz, and Paz watched her in a mirror. Sitting back in his armchair, like a man given up to digestion, in the attitude of an old man or an indifferent husband. the Captain clasped his hands over his stomach, and mechanically twirled his thumbs, looking stupidly at their rapid movement.

"But say something good about Adam!" exclaimed

Clémentine. "Tell me that he is not fickle, you who know him so well."

The appeal was sublime.

"This is the opportunity for raising an insurmountable barrier between us," thought the unhappy Paz, devising a heroic lie.—"Something good?" he said aloud. "I love him too well, you would not believe me. I am incapable of telling you any evil of him. . . . And so . . . Madame, I have a hard part to play between you two."

Clémentine looked down, fixing her eyes on his patent-leather shoes.

"You northerners have mere physical courage, you have no constancy in your decisions," said she in a low tone.

"What are you going to do alone, Madame?" replied Paz, with a perfectly ingenuous expression.

"You are not going to keep me company?"

"Forgive me for leaving you."

"Why! where are you going?"

"I am going to the circus; it is the first night, in the Champs Elysées, and I must not fail to be there . . ."

"Why not?" asked Clémentine, with a half-angry flash.

"Must I lay bare my heart?" he replied, coloring, "and confide to you what I conceal from my dear Adam, who believes that I love Poland alone?"

"What! our dear, noble Captain has a secret?"

"A disgrace which you will understand, and for which you can comfort me."

"A disgrace!—You? . . ."

"Yes, I—Count Paz, am madly in love with a girl who was touring round France with the Bouthor family, people who have a circus after the pattern of Franconi's, but who only perform at fairs! I got her an engagement from the manager of the Cirque-Olympique."

"Is she handsome?" asked the Countess.

"In my eyes," he replied sadly. "Malaga, that is her name to the public, is strong, nimble, and supple. Why do I prefer her to every other woman in the world?—Indeed, I

cannot tell you. When I see her with her black hair tied back with blue ribbons that float over her bare olive-tinted shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a gilt border, and silk tights which make her appear a living Greek statue, her feet in frayed satin slippers, flourishing flags in her hand to the sound of a military band, and flying through an enormous hoop covered with paper which crashes in the air—when her horse rushes round at a gallop, and she gracefully drops on to him again, applauded, honestly applauded, by a whole people—well, it excites me."

"More than a woman at a ball?" said Clémentine, with insinuating surprise.

"Yes," said Paz in a choked voice. "This splendid agility, this unfailing grace in constant peril, seem to me the greatest triumph of woman. Yes, Madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Elsler, all who reign or ever reigned on the boards, seem to me unworthy to untie Malaga's shoe strings—Malaga, who can mount or dismount a horse at a mad gallop, who slips under him from the left to reappear on the right, who flutters about the most fiery steed like a white will-o'-the-wisp, who can stand on the tip of one toe and then drop, sitting with her feet hanging, on a horse still galloping round, and who finally stands on his back without any reins, knitting a stocking, beating eggs, or stirring an omelet, to the intense admiration of the people, the true people, the peasantry and soldiers. During the walk round, Madame, that enchanting Columbine used to carry chairs balanced on the tip of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose I ever saw. Malaga is dexterity personified. Her strength is Herculean; with her tiny fist or her little foot she can shake off three or four men. She is the goddess of athletics."

"She must be stupid."

"Oh!" cried Paz, "she is as amusing as the heroine of 'Peveril of the Peak.' As heedless as a gypsy, she says everything that comes into her head; she cares no more for the future than you care for the halfpence you throw to a beg-

gar, and she lets out really sublime things. Nothing will ever convince her that an old diplomat is a handsome young man, and a million of francs would not make her change her opinion. Her love for a man is a perpetual flattery. Enjoying really insolent health, her teeth are two-and-thirty Oriental pearls set in coral. Her 'snout'—so she calls the lower part of her face—is, as Shakespeare has it, as fresh and sweet as a heifer's muzzle. And it can give bitter pain! She respects fine men, strong men—an Adolphus, an Augustus, an Alexander—acrobats and tumblers. Her teacher, a horrible Cassandro, thrashed her unmercifully; it cost thousands of blows to give her such agility, grace, and intrepidity."

"You are drunk with Malaga!" said the Countess.

"Her name is Malaga only on the posters," said Paz, with a look of annoyance. "She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in velvet and silk, like a princess. She leads two lives—one as a dancer, and one as a pretty woman."

"And does she love you?"

"She loves me—you will laugh—solely because I am a Pole. She sees in every Pole a Poniatowski, as he is shown in the print, jumping into the Elster; for to every Frenchman the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown, is a foaming torrent which swallowed up Poniatowski.—And with all this I am very unhappy, Madame—"

Clémentine was touched by a tear of rage in the Captain's eye.

"You love the extraordinary, you men," said she.

"And you?" asked Thaddeus.

"I know Adam so well that I know he could forget me for some acrobatic tumbler like your Malaga. But where did you find her?"

"At Saint-Cloud, last September, at the fair. She was standing in a corner of the platform covered with canvas where the performers walk round. Her comrades, all dressed as Poles, were making a terrific Babel. I saw

her silent and dreamy, and fancied I could guess that her thoughts were melancholy. Was there not enough to make her so—a girl of twenty? That was what touched me."

The Countess was leaning in a bewitching attitude, pensive, almost sad.

"Poor, poor Thaddeus!" she exclaimed. And with the good-fellowship of a really great lady, she added, not without a meaning smile, "Go; go to the circus!"

Thaddeus took her hand and kissed it, dropping a hot tear, and then went out. After having invented a passion for a circus-rider, he must give it some reality. Of his whole story nothing had been true but the minute's attention he had given to the famous Malaga, the rider of the Bouthor troupe at Saint-Cloud; her name had just caught his eye on an advertisement of the circus. The clown, bribed by a single five-franc piece, had told Paz that the girl was a foundling, or had perhaps been stolen.

Thaddeus now went to the circus and saw the handsome horsewoman again. For ten francs, a groom—they fill the place of dressers at a circus—informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived in the Rue des Fossés-du-Temple, on a fifth floor.

Next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to that quarter, and asked for Mademoiselle Turquet, in summer the understudy of the principal rider at the cirque, and in winter "a super" in a Boulevard theatre.

"Malaga!" shouted the doorkeeper, rushing into the attic, "here is a fine gentleman for you! He is asking Chapuzot all about you; and Chapuzot is cramming him to give me time to let you know."

"Thank you, M'ame Chapuzot; but what will he say to find me ironing my gown?"

"Pooh, stuff! When a man is in love, he loves everything about you."

"Is he an Englishman? They are fond of horses."

"No. He looks to me like a Spaniard."

"So much the worse. The Spaniards are down in the

market they say.—Stay here, Madame Chapuzot, I shall not look so left to myself."

"Who were you wanting, Monsieur?" said the woman, opening the door to Thaddeus.

"Mademoiselle Turquet."

"My child," said the porter's wife, wrapping her shawl round her, "here is somebody asking for you."

A rope on which some linen was airing knocked off the Captain's hat.

"What is your business, Monsieur?" asked Malaga, picking it up.

"I saw you at the circus; you remind me, Mademoiselle, of a daughter I lost; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you are so wonderfully like, I should wish to be of use to you if you will allow me."

"Well, to be sure! But sit down, Monsieur le Général," said Madame Chapuzot. "You cannot say fairer—nor handsomer."

"I am not by way of love-making, my good lady," said Paz. "I am a father in deep distress, eager to be cheated by a likeness."

"And so I am to pass as your daughter?" said Malaga, very roguishly, and without suspecting the absolute truth of the statement.

"Yes," said Paz. "I will come sometimes to see you; and that the illusion may be perfect, I will place you in handsome lodgings, nicely furnished—"

"I shall have furniture of my own?" said Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

"And servants," Paz went on; "and live quite at your ease."

Malaga looked at the stranger from under her brow.

"From what country are you, Monsieur?"

"I am a Pole."

"Then I accept," said she.

Paz went away, promising to call again.

"That is a tough one!" said Marguerite Turquet, looking

at Madame Chapuzot. "But I am afraid this man is wheedling me to humor some fancy. Well, I will risk it."

A month after this whimsical scene, the fair circus-rider was established in rooms charmingly furnished by Count Adam's upholsterer, for Paz wished that his folly should be talked about in the Laginski household. Malaga, to whom the adventure was like an Arabian Nights' dream, was waited on by the Chapuzot couple—at once her servants and her confidants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet expected some startling climax; but at the end of three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzots could account for the Polish Count's fancy. Paz would spend about an hour there once a week, during which he sat in the drawing-room, never choosing to go either into Malaga's boudoir nor into her bedroom, which, in fact, he never entered in spite of the cleverest manœuvring on her part and on that of the Chapuzots. The Count inquired about the little incidents that varied the horsewoman's life, and on going away he always left two forty-franc pieces on the chimney-shelf.

"He looks dreadfully bored," said Madame Chapuzot.

"Yes," replied Malaga, "that man is as cold as frost after a thaw."

"He is a jolly good fellow, all the same," cried Chapuzot, delighted to see himself dressed in blue Elbeuf cloth, and as smart as a Minister's office-messenger.

Paz, by his periodical tribute, made Marguerite Turquet an allowance of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, added to her small earnings at the circus, secured her a splendid existence as compared with her past squalor. Strange tales were current among the performers at the circus as to Malaga's good fortune. The girl's vanity allowed her rent to be stated at sixty thousand francs, instead of the modest six thousand which her rooms cost the prudent Captain. According to the clowns and supers, Malaga ate off silver plate; and she certainly came to the circus in pretty burnooses, in shawls, and elegant scarfs. And, to crown

all, the Pole was the best fellow a circus-rider could come across; never tiresome, never jealous, leaving Malaga perfect freedom.

"Some women are so lucky!" said Malaga s rival. "Such a thing would never happen to me, though I bring in a third of the receipts."

Malaga wore smart "coal-scuttles," and sometimes gave herself airs in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the youth of fashion began to observe her. In short, Malaga was talked about in the flash world of equivocal women, and her good fortune was attacked by calumny. She was reported to be a somnambulist, and the Pole was said to be a magnetizer in search of the Philosopher's Stone. Other comments of a far more venomous taint made Malaga more inquisitive than Psyche; she reported them, with tears, to Paz.

"When I owe a woman a grudge," said she to conclude, "I do not calumniate her, I do not say that a man magnetizes her to find stones. I say that she is a bad lot. and I prove it. Why do you get me into trouble?"

Paz was cruelly speechless.

Madame Chapuzot succeeded at last in discovering his name and title. Then, at the Hotel Laginski, she ascertained some positive facts: Thaddeus was unmarried, he was not known to have a dead daughter either in Poland or France. Malaga could not help feeling a thrill of terror.

"My dear child," said Madame Chapuzot, "that monster—"

A man who was satisfied with gazing at a beautiful creature like Malaga—gazing at her by stealth—from under his brows—not daring to come to any decision—without any confidence; such a man, in Madame Chapuzot's mind, must be a monster. "That monster is breaking you in, to lead you on to something illegal or criminal. God above us! if you were to be brought up at the Assizes—and it makes me shudder from head to foot to think of it, I quake only to speak of it—or in the Criminal Court, and your name

was in the newspapers! . . . Do you know what I should do in your place? Well, in your place, to make all safe, I should warn the police."

One day, when mad notions were fermenting in Malaga's brain, Paz having laid his gold pieces on the velvet chimney-shelf, she snatched up the money and flung it in his face, saying, "I will not take stolen money!"

The Captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots, and came no more.

Clémentine was spending the summer on the estate of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy.

When the troupe at the circus no longer saw Thaddeus in his seat, there was a great talk among the artists. Malaga's magnanimity was regarded as folly by some, as cunning by others. The Pole's behavior, as explained to the most experienced of the women, seemed inexplicable. In the course of a single week, Thaddeus received thirty-seven letters from women of the town. Happily for him, his singular reserve gave rise to no curiosity in fashionable circles, and remained the subject of discussion in the flash set only.

Two months later, the handsome rider, swamped in debt, wrote to Count Paz the following letter, which the dandies of the day regarded as a masterpiece:

"You, whom I still venture to call my friend, will you not take pity on me after what passed between us, which you took so ill? My heart disowns everything that could hurt your feelings. If I was so happy as to make you feel some charm when you sat near me, as you used to do, come again . . . otherwise, I shall sink into despair. Poverty has come upon me already, and you do not know what stupid things it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring for two sous and one sou's worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you love? The Chapuzots have left me after seeming so devoted to me. Your absence has shown me the shallowness of human attachment. A bailiff, who turned a deaf ear to me, has seized every-

thing on behalf of the landlord, who has no pity, and of the jeweller, who will not wait even ten days; for with you men, credit vanishes with confidence. What a position for a woman who has nothing to reproach herself for but a little amusement! My dear friend, I have taken everything of any value to my uncle's; I have nothing left but my memory of you, and the hard weather is coming on. All through the winter I shall have no fire, since nothing but melodrama is played at the Boulevard, in which I have nothing to do but tiny parts, which do not show a woman off. How could you misunderstand my noble feelings toward you, for, after all, we have not two ways of expressing our gratitude? How is it that you, who seemed so pleased to see me comfortable, could leave me in misery? Oh, my only friend on earth, before I go back to travel from fair to fair with the Bouthors—for so, at any rate, I can make my living—forgive me for wanting to know if I have really lost you forever. If I should happen to think of you just as I was jumping through the hoop, I might break my legs by missing time. Come what may, I am yours for life.

"MARGUERITE TURQUET."

"This letter," exclaimed Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, "is well worth my ten thousand francs."

Clémentine came home on the following day, and Paz saw her once more, lovelier and more gracious than ever. During dinner the Countess preserved an air of perfect indifference toward Thaddeus, but a scene took place between the Count and his wife after their friend had left. Thaddeus, with an affectation of asking Adam's advice, had left Malaga's letter in his hands, as if by accident.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam to his wife, after seeing Paz make his escape. "What a misfortune for a man of his superior stamp to be the plaything of a ballet-girl of the lowest class! He will love anything; he will degrade himself; he will be unrecognizable before long. Here, my dear, read that," and he handed her Malaga's letter.

Clémentine read the note, which smelled of tobacco, and tossed it away with disgust.

"However thick the bandage over his eyes may be, he must have found something out. Malaga must have played him some faithless trick."

"And he is going back to her!" cried Clémentine. "He will forgive her! You men can have no pity for any but those horrible women!"

"They want it so badly!" said Adam.

"Thaddeus did himself justice—by keeping to himself!" said she.

"Oh, my dearest, you go too far," said the Count, who, though he was at first delighted to lower his friend in his wife's eyes, would not the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam well, had begged for absolute secrecy; he had only spoken, he said, as an excuse for his dissipations, and to beg his friend to allow him to have a thousand crowns for Malaga.

"He is a man of great pride," Adam went on.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, to have spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and to wait for such a letter as that to rouse him before taking her the money to pay her debts! For a Pole, on my honor! . . ."

"But he may ruin you!" said Clémentine in the acrid tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her catlike distrustfulness.

"Oh! I know him," said Adam. "He would sacrifice Malaga to us."

"We shall see," replied the Countess.

"If it were needful for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to give her up. Constantine tells me that during the time when he was seeing her, Paz, usually so sober, sometimes came in quite fuddled. If he allowed himself to take to drink, I should be as much grieved as if he were my son."

"Do not tell me any more!" cried the Countess with another gesture of disgust.

Two days later the Captain could see in her manner, in the tone of her voice, in her eyes, the terrible results of Adam's betrayal. Scorn had opened gulfs between him and this charming woman. And he fell forthwith into deep melancholy, devoured by this thought, "You have made yourself unworthy of her." Life became a burden to him; the bright sunshine was gloomy in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter thought, he had some happy moments: he could now give himself up without danger to his admiration for the Countess, who never paid him the slightest attention when, at a party, hidden in a corner, mute, all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her movements, not a note of her song when she sang. He lived in this enchanting life: he might himself groom the horse that she was to ride, and devote himself to the management of her splendid house with redoubled care for its interests.

These unspoken joys were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose child never knows anything of his mother's heart: for is it knowledge so long as even one thing remains unknown? Was not this finer than Petrarch's chaste passion for Laura, which, after all, was well repaid by a wealth of glory, and by the triumph of the poetry she had inspired? Was not the emotion which Assas felt in dying, in truth a whole life? This emotion Paz felt every day without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

What is there in love, that Paz, notwithstanding these secret delights, was consumed by sorrow? The Catholic religion has so elevated love that she has married it inseparably, so to speak, to esteem and generosity. Love does not exist apart from the fine qualities of which man is proud, and so rarely are we loved if we are contemned, that Thaddeus was perishing of his self-inflicted wounds. Only to hear her say that she could have loved him, and then to die! The hapless lover would have thought his life well paid for. The torments of his previous position seemed to him preferable to living close to her, loading her

with his generosity without being appreciated or understood. In short, he wanted the price of his virtue.

He grew thin and yellow, and fell so thoroughly ill, consumed by low fever, that during the month of January he kept his bed, though refusing to see a physician. Count Adam grew extremely uneasy about his poor Thaddeus. The Countess then was so cruel as to say, when they were together one day, "Let him alone; do not you see that he has some Olympian remorse?"

This speech stung Thaddeus to the courage of despair; he got up, went out, tried some amusement, and recovered his health.

In the month of February Adam lost a rather considerable sum at the Jockey Club, and, being afraid of his wife, he begged Thaddeus to place this sum to the account of his extravagance for Malaga.

"What is there strange in the notion that the ballet-girl should have cost you twenty thousand francs? It concerns no one but me. Whereas, if the Countess should know that I had lost it at play, I should fall in her esteem, and she would be in alarm for the future."

"This to crown all!" cried Thaddeus, with a deep sigh.

"Ah! Thaddeus, this service would make us quits if I were not already the debtor."

"Adam, you may have children. Give up gambling," said his friend.

"Twenty thousand francs more that Malaga has cost us!" exclaimed the Countess some days after, on discovering Adam's generosity to Paz. "And ten thousand before —that is thirty thousand in all! Fifteen hundred francs a year, the price of my box at the Italian opera, a whole fortune to many people. . . . Oh! you Poles are incomprehensible!" cried she, as she picked some flowers in her beautiful conservatory. "You care no more than that!"

"Poor Paz—"

"Poor Paz, poor Paz!" she echoed, interrupting him. "What good does he do us? I will manage the house my-

self! Give him the hundred louis a year that he refused, and let him make his own arrangements with the Olympic Circus."

"He is of the greatest use to us; he has saved us at least forty thousand francs this year. In short, my dearest, he has placed a hundred thousand francs for us in Nucingen's bank, and a steward would have netted them."

Clémentine was softened, but she was not the less hard on Thaddeus.

Some days after she desired Paz to come to her in her boudoir, where, a year since, she had been startled by comparing him with the Count. This time she received him alone, without any suspicion of danger.

"My dear Paz," said she, with the careless familiarity of fine folk to their inferiors, "if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do one thing which he will never ask, but which I, as his wife, do not hesitate to require of you—"

"It is about Malaga?" said Thaddeus with deep irony.

"Well, yes, it is," she said. "If you want to end your days with us, if you wish that we should remain friends, give her up. How can an old soldier—"

"I am but five-and-thirty, and have not a gray hair!"

"You look as if you had," said she, "and that is the same thing. How can a man so capable of putting two and two together, so superior . . ."

What was horrible was that she spoke the word with such an evident intention of rousing in him the nobleness of soul which she believed to be dead.

"So superior as you are," she went on, after a little pause, which a gesture from Paz forced upon her, "allow yourself to be entrapped like a boy. Your affair with her has made Malaga famous.—Well! My uncle wanted to see her, and he saw her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga is very ready to receive all these gentlemen.—I believed you to be high-minded.—Take shame to yourself! Come, would she be an irreparable loss to you?"

"Madame, if I knew of any sacrifice by which I might

recover your esteem, it would soon be made; but to give up Malaga is not a sacrifice—"

"In your place that is what I should say if I were a man," replied Clémentine. "Well, but if I take it as a great sacrifice, there is nothing to be angry at."

Paz went away, fearing he might do some mad act; he felt his brain invaded by crazy notions. He went out for a walk, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but failed to cool the burning of his face and brow. "I believed you to be high-minded!" He heard the words again and again. "And scarcely a year ago," said he to himself, "to hear Clémentine, I had beaten the Russians single-handed!" He thought of quitting the Laginski household, of asking to be sent on service in the Spahi regiment, and getting himself killed in Africa; but a dreadful fear checked him: "What would become of them without me? They would soon be ruined. Poor Countess, what a horrible life it would be for her to be reduced even to thirty thousand francs a year! Come," said he to himself, "since she can never be yours, courage, finish your work!"

As all the world knows, since 1830 the Carnival in Paris has grown to prodigious proportions, making it European, and burlesque, and animated to a far greater degree than the departed carnivals of Venice. Is this because, since fortunes have so enormously diminished, Parisians have thought of amusing themselves collectively, just as in their clubs they have a drawing-room without any mistress of the house, without politeness, and quite cheap? Be this as it may, the month of March was prodigal of those balls, where dancing, farce, coarse fun, delirium, grotesque figures, and banter made keen by Paris wit, achieved gigantic results. This madness had its Pandemonium at that time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and its Napoleon in Musard, a little man born to rule an orchestra as tremendous as the rampant mob, and to conduct a galop—that whirl of witches at their Sabbath, and one of Auber's triumphs, for the galop derived its form and its poetry from the famous galop in "Gustavus." May

not this vehement finale serve as a symbol of an age when, for fifty years, everything has rushed on with the swiftness of a dream?

Now, our grave Thaddeus, bearing an immaculate image in his heart, went to Malaga to invite her, the queen of carnival dancing, to spend an evening at Musard's as soon as he learned that the Countess, disguised to the teeth, was intending to come with two other young ladies, escorted by their husbands, to see the curious spectacle of one of these monster balls. On Shrove Tuesday night, in the year of grace 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the Countess, wrapped in a black domino, and seated on a bench of one of the amphitheatres of the Babylonian hall where Valentino has since given his concerts, saw Thaddeus, dressed as Robert Macaire, leading the circus-rider in the costume of a savage, her head dressed with nodding plumes like a horse at a coronation, and leaping among the groups like a perfect Jack-o'-lantern.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clémentine to her husband, "you Poles are not men of character. Who would not have felt sure of Thaddeus? He gave me his word, not knowing that I should be here and see all without being seen."

Some days after this she invited Paz to dinner. After dinner, Adam left them together, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a way as to make him feel that she would no longer have him about the house.

"Indeed, Madame," said Thaddeus humbly, "you are quite right. I am a wretch; I had pledged my word. But what can I do? I put off the parting with Malaga till after the Carnival. . . . And I will be honest with you; the woman has so much power over me . . ."

"A woman who gets herself turned out of Musard's by the police, and for such dancing?"

"I admit it; I sit condemned; I will quit your house. But you know Adam. If I hand over to you the conduct of your affairs, you will have to exert great energy. Though I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to keep an eye on

your concerns, how to manage your household, and superintend the smallest details. Allow me then to remain till I have seen you qualified to continue my system of management. You have now been married three years, and are safe from the first follies consequent on the honeymoon. The ladies of Paris society, even with the highest titles, understand very well in these days how to control a fortune and a household. . . . Well, as soon as I am assured, not of your capacity, but of your firmness, I will leave Paris."

"It is Thaddeus of Warsaw that speaks, not Thaddeus of the circus. Come back to us cured."

"Cured?—never!" said Paz, his eyes fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. "You cannot know, Countess, all the spice, the unexpectedness there is in that woman's wit." And feeling his courage fail him, he added: "There is not a single woman of fashion, with her prim airs, who is worth that frank young animal nature."

"In fact, I should not choose to have anything in me of the animal!" said the Countess, with a flashing look like an adder in a rage.

After that day Count Paz explained to Clémentine all her affairs, made himself her tutor, taught her the difficulties of managing her property, the real cost of things, and the way to avoid being too extensively robbed by her people. She might trust Constantine, and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained Constantine. By the month of May he thought the Countess perfectly capable of administering her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those clear-sighted women whose instincts are alert, with an inborn genius for household rule.

The situation thus naturally brought about by Thaddeus took a sudden turn most distressing for him, for his sufferings were not so light as he made them seem. The hapless lover had not reckoned with accident. Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of leaving, installed himself as his friend's sick-nurse. His devotedness was indefatigable.

A woman who had had an interest in looking through the telescope of foresight would have seen in the Captain's heroism the sort of punishment which noble souls inflict on themselves to subdue their involuntary thoughts of sin; but women see everything or nothing, according to their frame of mind; love is their sole luminary.

For forty-five days Paz watched and nursed Mitgislas without seeming to have a thought of Malaga, for the excellent reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, seeing Adam at death's door, and yet not dead, had a consultation of the most famous doctors.

"If he gets through this," said the most learned of the physicians, "it can only be by an effort of nature. It lies with those who nurse him to watch for the moment and aid nature. The Count's life is in the hands of his attendants."

Thaddeus went to communicate this verdict to Clémentine, who was sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much to rest after her fatigues as to leave the field free for the doctors, and not to be in their way. As he trod the gravelled paths leading from the boudoir to the rockery on which the Chinese summer-house was built, Clémentine's lover felt as though he were in one of the gulfs described by Alighieri. The unhappy man had never foreseen the chance of becoming Clémentine's husband, and he had bogged himself in a swamp of mud. When he reached her his face was set, sublime in its despair. Like Medusa's head, it communicated terror.

"He is dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given no hope; at least, they leave it to nature. Do not go in just yet. They are still there, and Bianchon himself is examining him."

"Poor fellow!—I wonder whether I have ever worried him," she said.

"You have made him very happy; be quite easy on that point," said Thaddeus; "and you have been indulgent to him—"

"The loss will be irreparable."

"But, dear lady, supposing the Count should die, had you not formed your opinion of him?"

"I do not love him blindly," she said; "but I loved as a wife ought to love her husband."

"Then," said Thaddeus, in a voice new to Clémentine's experience of him, "you ought to feel less regret than if you were losing one of those men who are a woman's pride, her love, her whole life! You may be frank with such a friend as I am. . . . I shall regret him—I! Long before your marriage I had made him my child, and I have devoted my life to him. I shall have no interest left on earth. But life still has charms for a widow of four-and-twenty."

"Why, you know very well that I love no one," said she, with the roughness of sorrow.

"You do not know yet what it is to love," said Thaddeus.

"Oh! husband for husband, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. For nearly a month now we have been asking ourselves, 'Will he live?' These fluctuations have prepared me, as they have you, for this end. I may be frank with you?—Well, then, I would give part of my life to save Adam's. Does not independence for a woman, here in Paris, mean liberty to be gulled by the pretence of love in men who are ruined or profligate? I have prayed God to spare me my husband —so gentle, such a good fellow, so little fractious, and who was beginning to be a little afraid of me."

"You are honest, and I like you the better for it," said Thaddeus, taking Clémentine's hands, which she allowed him to kiss. "In such a solemn moment there is indescribable satisfaction in finding a woman devoid of hypocrisy. It is possible to talk to you.—Consider the future; supposing God should not listen to you—and I am one of those who are most ready to cry to Him: Spare my friend! —for these fifty nights past have not made my eyes heavy, and if thirty days and thirty nights more care are needed, you, Madame, may sleep while I watch. I will snatch him from death, if, as they say, he can be saved by care. But

if, in spite of you, in spite of me, the Count is dead? Well, then, if you were loved, or worshipped, by a man whose heart and character were worthy of yours—"

"I have perhaps madly wished to be loved, but I have never met—"

"Supposing you were mistaken."

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, suspecting him less of loving her than of a covetous dream; she poured contempt on him by a glance, measuring him from head to foot, and crushed him with two words, "Poor Malaga!" pronounced in those tones such as fine ladies alone can find in the gamut of their contempt.

She rose and left Thaddeus fainting, for she did not turn round, but walked with great dignity back to her boudoir, and thence up to her husband's room.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick man's bedside, and gave all his care to the Count, as though he had not received his own death-blow.

From that dreadful moment he became silent; he had a duel to fight with disease, and he carried it through in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At any hour his eyes were always beaming like two lamps. Without showing the slightest resentment toward Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed deaf. He had said to himself, "She shall owe Adam's life to me!" and these words he had, as it were, written in letters of fire in the sick man's room.

At the end of a fortnight Clémentine was obliged to give up some of the nursing, or risk falling ill from so much fatigue. Paz was inexhaustible. At last, about the end of August, Bianchon, the family doctor, answered for the Count's life: "Ah, Madame," said he to Clémentine, "you are under not the slightest obligation to me. But for his friend we could not have saved him!"

On the day after the terrible scene in the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his

nephew, for he was setting out for Russia with a secret mission; and Paz, overwhelmed by the previous evening, had spoken a few words to the diplomat.

On the very day when Count Adam and his wife went out for the first time for a drive, at the moment when the carriage was turning from the steps, an orderly came into the courtyard and asked for Count Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round to take a letter bearing the stamp of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and put it into the side-pocket of his coat, with a decision which precluded any questions on the part of Clémentine or Adam. It cannot be denied that persons of good breeding are masters of the language that uses no speech. Nevertheless, as they reached the Porte Maillot, Adam, assuming the privilege of a convalescent whose whims must be indulged, said to Thaddeus:

"There can be no indiscretions between two brothers who love each other as you and I do; you know what is in that letter; tell me, I am in a fever of curiosity."

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus as an angry woman can, and said to her husband, "He has been so sulky with me these two months that I shall take good care not to press him."

"Oh dear me!" replied Thaddeus, "as I cannot hinder the newspapers from publishing it, I may very well reveal the secret. The Emperor Nicholas does me the favor of appointing me Captain on service in a regiment starting with the Khiva Expedition."

"And you are going?" cried Adam.

"I shall go, my dear fellow. I came as Captain, and as Captain I return. Malaga might lead me to make a fool of myself. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I did not set out in September for St. Petersburg, I should have to travel overland, and I am not rich. I must leave Malaga her little independence. How can I fail to provide for the future of the only woman who has understood me? Malaga thinks me a great man! Mal-

aga thinks me handsome! Malaga may perhaps be faithless, but she would go through—!"

"Through a hoop for you, and fall on her feet on horseback!" said Clémentine, sharply.

"Oh, you do not know Malaga," said the Captain, with deep bitterness, and an ironical look which made Clémentine uneasy and silent.

"Farewell to the young trees of this lovely Bois de Boulogne, where Parisian ladies drive, and the exiles wander who have found a home here. I know that my eyes will never again see the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, or of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar at the Ronds-points.

"On the Asiatic frontier, obedient to the schemes of the great Emperor I have chosen to be my master, promoted perhaps to command an army, for sheer courage, for constantly risking my life, I may indeed regret the Champs-Elysées where you, once, made me take a place in the carriage by your side.—Finally, I shall never cease to regret the severity of Malaga—of the Malaga I am at this moment thinking of."

This was said in a tone that made Clémentine shiver.

"Then you love Malaga very truly?" she said.

"I have sacrificed for her the honor we never sacrifice—"

"Which?"

"That which we would fain preserve at any cost in the eyes of the idol we worship."

After this speech Thaddeus kept impenetrable silence; he broke it only when, as they drove down the Champs-Elysées, he pointed to a wooden structure and said, "There is the circus!"

Before their last dinner he went to the Russian Embassy for a few minutes, and from thence to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and he started for le Havre next morning before the Countess and Adam were up.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his eyes, as he learned that Count Paz was gone, "a friend in the

truest sense of the word, and I cannot think what has made him flee from my house as if it were the plague. We are not the sort of friends to quarrel over a woman," he went on, looking full at Clémentine, "and yet all he said yesterday about Malaga—But he never laid the tip of his finger on the girl."

"How do you know?" asked Clémentine.

"Well, I was naturally curious to see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl cannot account for Thaddeus' extraordinary reserve—"

"That is enough," said the Countess, going off to her own room, and saying to herself, "I have surely been the victim of some sublime hoax."

She had scarcely made the reflection, when Constantine placed in her hands the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled in the night:

"COUNTESS—To go to be killed in the Caucasus, and to bear the burden of your scorn, is too much; a man should die unmutilated. I loved you from the first time I saw you, as a man loves the woman he will love forever, even when she is faithless—I, under obligations to Adam, whom you chose and married—I, so poor, the volunteer steward, devoted to your household. In this dreadful catastrophe I found a delightful existence. To be an indispensable wheel in the machine, to know myself useful to your luxury and comfort, was a source of joy to me; and if that joy had been keen when Adam alone was my care, think what it must have been when the woman I worshipped was at once the cause and the effect! I have known all the joys of motherhood in my love; and I accepted life on those terms. Like the beggars on the highroads, I built myself a hut of stones on the skirts of your beautiful home, but without holding out my hand for alms. I, poor and unhappy, but blinded by Adam's happiness, I was the donor. Yes, you were hedged in by a love as pure as that of a guardian angel; it watched while you slept; it caressed you with a look as you passed by; it was

glad merely to exist; in short, you were the sunshine of home to the hapless exile who is now writing to you, with tears in his eyes, as he recalls the happiness of those early days.

"At the age of eighteen, with no one to love me, I had chosen as an ideal mistress a charming woman at Warsaw, to whom I referred all my thoughts and my wishes, the queen of my days and nights. This woman knew nothing of it, but why inform her? For my part, what I loved was love.

"You may fancy, from this adventure of my boyhood, how happy I was, living within the sphere of your influence, grooming your horse, picking out new gold pieces for your purse, superintending the splendor of your table and your entertainments, seeing you eclipse fortunes greater than your own by my good management. With what zeal did I not rush round Paris when Adam said to me, 'Thaddeus, *She* wants this or that!' It was one of those joys for which there are no words. You have now and again wished for some trifle within a certain time which has compelled me to feats of expedition, driving for six or seven hours in a cab; and what happiness it has been to walk in your service. When I have watched you smiling in the midst of your flowers without being seen by you, I have forgotten that no one loved me—in short, at such moments I was but eighteen again.

"Sometimes, when my happiness turned my brain, I would go at night and kiss the spot where your feet had left, for me, a luminous trace, just as of old I had stolen, with a thief's miraculous skill, to kiss a key which Countess Ladislas had touched on opening a door. The air you breathed was embalmed; to me it was fresh life to breathe it; and I felt, as they say is the case in the tropics, overwhelmed by an atmosphere surcharged with creative elements. I must tell you all these things to account for the strange fatuity of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died sooner than divulge my secret.

"You may remember those few days when you were curious, when you wanted to see the worker of the wonders which had at last struck you with surprise. I believed—forgive me, Madame—I believed that you would love me. Your kindliness, your looks—interpreted by a lover—seemed fraught with so much danger to me that I took up Malaga, knowing that there are *liaisons* which no woman can forgive; I took the girl up at the moment when I saw that my love was inevitably infectious. Overwhelm me now with the scorn which you poured upon me so freely when I did not deserve it; but I think I may be quite sure that if, on the evening when your aunt took the Count out, I had said what I have here written, having once said it I should have been like the tame tiger who has at last set his teeth in living flesh, and who scents warm blood. . . .

"*Midnight.*

"I could write no more, the memory of that evening was too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium! I saw expectancy in your eyes; victory and its crimson banners may have burned in mine and fascinated yours. My crime was to think such things—and perhaps wrongly. You alone can be judge of that fearful scene when I succeeded in crushing love, desire, the most stupendous forces of manhood, under the icy hand of gratitude which must be eternal. Your terrible scorn punished me. You have showed me that neither disgust nor contempt can ever be got over. I love you like a madman. I must have gone away if Adam had died. There is all the more reason since Adam is saved. I did not snatch my friend from the grave to betray him. And, indeed, my departure is the due punishment for the thought that came to me that I would let him die when the physicians said his life depended on his attendants.

"Farewell, Madame; in leaving Paris I lose everything, but you lose nothing in parting with yours most faithfully,

"THADDEUS PAZ."

"If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?" thought Clémentine, sitting dejected, with her eyes fixed on a flower in the carpet.

This is the note which Constantine delivered privately to his master:

"My dear Mitgislas—Malaga has told me all. For the sake of your happiness, never let a word escape you in Clémentine's presence as to your visits to the circus-rider; let her still believe that Malaga costs me a hundred thousand francs. With the Countess's character she will not forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga.—I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have a fit of spleen, and at the pace I mean to go, in three months I shall be Prince Paz, or dead. Farewell; though I have drawn sixty thousand francs out of Nucingen's, we are quits. Thaddeus."

"Idiot that I am! I very nearly betrayed myself just now by speaking of the circus-rider!" said Adam to himself.

Thaddeus has been gone three years, and the papers do not as yet mention any Prince Paz. Countess Laginska takes a keen interest in the Emperor Nicholas's expeditions; she is a Russian at heart, and reads with avidity all the news from that country. Once or twice a year she says to the Ambassador, with an affectation of indifference, "Do you know what has become of our poor friend Paz?"

Alas! most Parisian women, keen-eyed and subtle as they are supposed to be, pass by—and always will pass by—such a one as Paz without observing him. Yes, more than one Paz remains misunderstood; but, fearful thought! some are misunderstood even when they are loved. The simplest woman in the world requires some little coxcombry in the greatest man; and the most heroic love counts for nothing if it is uncut: it needs the arts of the polisher and the jeweller.

In the month of January, 1842, Countess Laginska, beautified by gentle melancholy, inspired a mad passion in the Comte de la Palférine, one of the most audacious bucks of Paris at this day. La Palférine understood the difficulty of conquering a woman guarded by a chimera; to triumph over this bewitching woman, he trusted to a surprise, and to the assistance of a woman who, being a little jealous of Clémentine, would lend herself to plot the chances of the adventure.

Clémentine, incapable with all her wit of suspecting such treachery, was so imprudent as to go with this false friend to the masked ball at the opera. At about three in the morning, carried away by the excitement of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had exhausted himself in attentions, consented to sup with him, and was getting into the lady's carriage. At this critical moment she was seized by a strong arm, and in spite of her cries placed in her own carriage, which was standing with the door open, though she did not know that it was waiting.

"He has not left Paris!" she exclaimed, recognizing Thaddeus, who ran off when he saw the carriage drive away with the Countess.

Had ever another woman such a romance in her life?

Clémentine is always hoping to see Paz again.

PARIS, *January, 1842.*

ALBERT SAVARUS

To Madame Emile Girardin

ONE OF THE FEW drawing-rooms where, under the Restoration, the Archbishop of Besançon was sometimes to be seen, was that of the Baronne de Watteville, to whom he was particularly attached on account of her religious sentiments.

A word as to this lady, the most important lady of Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the most successful and illustrious of murderers and renegades—his extraordinary adventures are too much a part of history to be related here—this nineteenth century Monsieur de Watteville was as gentle and peaceable as his ancestor of the *Grand Siècle* had been passionate and turbulent. After living in the *Comté*[1] like a wood-louse in the crack of a wainscot, he had married the heiress of the celebrated house of Rupt. Mademoiselle de Rupt brought twenty thousand francs a year in the funds to add to the ten thousand francs a year in real estate of the Baron de Watteville. The Swiss gentleman's coat-of-arms (the Wattevilles are Swiss) was then borne as an escutcheon of pretence on the old shield of the Rupts. The marriage, arranged in 1802, was solemnized in 1815 after the second Restoration. Within three years of the birth of a daughter all Madame de Watteville's grandparents were dead, and their estates wound up. Monsieur de Watteville's house was then sold, and they settled in the Rue de la Préfecture in the fine old

[1] La Franche Comté.

mansion of the Rupts, with an immense garden stretching to the Rue du Perron. Madame de Watteville, devout as a girl, became even more so after her marriage. She is one of the queens of the saintly brotherhood which gives the upper circles of Besançon a solemn air and prudish manners in harmony with the character of the town.

Monsieur le Baron de Watteville, a dry, lean man devoid of intelligence, looked worn out without any one knowing whereby, for he enjoyed the profoundest ignorance; but as his wife was a red-haired woman, and of a stern nature that became proverbial (we still say "as sharp as Madame de Watteville"), some wits of the legal profession declared that he had been worn against that rock—*Rupt* is obviously derived from *rupes*. Scientific students of social phenomena will not fail to have observed that Rosalie was the only offspring of the union between the Wattevilles and the Rupts.

Monsieur de Watteville spent his existence in a handsome workshop with a lathe; he was a turner! As subsidiary to this pursuit, he took up a fancy for making collections. Philosophical doctors, devoted to the study of madness, regard this tendency toward collecting as a first degree of mental aberration when it is set on small things. The Baron de Watteville treasured shells and geological fragments of the neighborhood of Besançon. Some contradictory folk, especially women, would say of Monsieur de Watteville, "He has a noble soul! He perceived from the first days of his married life that he would never be his wife's master, so he threw himself into a mechanical occupation and good living."

The house of the Rupts was not devoid of a certain magnificence worthy of Louis XIV., and bore traces of the nobility of the two families who had mingled in 1815. The chandeliers of glass cut in the shape of leaves, the brocades, the damask, the carpets, the gilt furniture, were all in harmony with the old liveries and the old servants. Though served in blackened family plate, round a looking-glass tray

furnished with Dresden china, the food was exquisite. The wines selected by Monsieur de Watteville, who, to occupy his time and vary his employments, was his own butler, enjoyed a sort of fame throughout the department. Madame de Watteville's fortune was a fine one; while her husband's, which consisted only of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand francs a year, was not increased by inheritance. It is needless to add that in consequence of Madame de Watteville's close intimacy with the Archbishop, the three or four clever or remarkable Abbés of the diocese who were not averse to good feeding were very much at home at her house.

At a ceremonial dinner given in honor of I know not whose wedding, at the beginning of September, 1834, when the women were standing in a circle round the drawing-room fire, and the men in groups by the windows, every one exclaimed with pleasure at the entrance of Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, who was announced.

"Well, and the lawsuit?" they all cried.

"Won!" replied the Vicar-General. "The verdict of the Court, from which we had no hope, you know why—"

This was an allusion to the members of the First Court of Appeal of 1830; the Legitimists had almost all withdrawn.

"The verdict is in our favor on every point, and reverses the decision of the Lower Court."

"Everybody thought you were done for."

"And we should have been, but for me. I told our advocate to be off to Paris, and at the crucial moment I was able to secure a new pleader, to whom we owe our victory, a wonderful man—"

"At Besançon?" said Monsieur de Watteville, guilelessly.

"At Besançon," replied the Abbé de Grancey.

"Oh, yes, Savaron," said a handsome young man sitting near the Baroness, and named de Soulas.

"He spent five or six nights over it; he devoured documents and briefs; he had seven or eight interviews of sev-

eral hours with me," continued Monsieur de Grancey, who had just reappeared at the Hotel de Rupt for the first time in three weeks. "In short, Monsieur Savaron has just completely beaten the celebrated lawyer whom our adversaries had sent for from Paris. This young man is wonderful, the bigwigs say. Thus the chapter is twice victorious; it has triumphed in law and also in politics, since it has vanquished Liberalism in the person of the Counsel of our Municipality.—'Our adversaries,' so our advocate said, 'must not expect to find readiness on all sides to ruin the Archbishoprics.'—The President was obliged to enforce silence. All the townfolk of Besançon applauded. Thus the possession of the buildings of the old convent remains with the Chapter of the Cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savaron, however, invited his Parisian opponent to dine with him as they came out of court. He accepted, saying, 'Honor to every conqueror,' and complimented him on his success without bitterness."

"And where did you unearth this lawyer?" said Madame de Watteville. "I never heard his name before."

"Why, you can see his windows from hence," replied the Vicar-General. "Monsieur Savaron lives in the Rue du Perron; the garden of his house joins on to yours."

"But he is not a native of the Comté," said Monsieur de Watteville.

"So little is he a native of any place that no one knows where he comes from," said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"But who is he?" asked Madame de Watteville, taking the Abbé's arm to go into the dining-room. "If he is a stranger, by what chance has he settled at Besançon? It is a strange fancy for a barrister."

"Very strange!" echoed Amédée de Soulas, whose biography is here necessary to the understanding of this tale.

In all ages, France and England have carried on an exchange of trifles, which is all the more constant because it evades the tyranny of the Custom-house. The fashion

that is called English in Paris is called French in London, and this is reciprocal. The hostility of the two nations is suspended on two points—the uses of words and the fashion of dress. "God Save the King," the national air of England, is a tune written by Lulli for the chorus of Esther or of Athalie. Hoops, introduced at Paris by an Englishwoman, were invented in London, it is known why, by a Frenchwoman, the notorious Duchess of Portsmouth. They were at first so jeered at that the first Englishwoman who appeared in them at the Tuileries narrowly escaped being crushed by the crowd; but they were adopted. This fashion tyrannized over the ladies of Europe for half a century. At the peace of 1815, for a year, the long waists of the English were a standing jest; all Paris went to see Pothier and Brunet in "Les Anglaises pour rire"; but in 1816 and 1817 the belt of the Frenchwoman, which in 1814 cut her across the bosom, gradually descended till it reached the hips.

Within ten years England has made two little gifts to our language. The "Incroyable," the "Merveilleux," the "Élégant," the three successors of the *petit-maître* of discreditable etymology, have made way for the "dandy" and the "lion." The *lion* is not the parent of the *lionne*. The *lionne* is due to the famous song by Alfred de Musset:

"Avez vous vu dans Barcelone
. . . . . .
C'est ma maitresse et ma lionne."

There has been a fusion—or, if you prefer it, a confusion —of the two words and the leading ideas. When an absurdity can amuse Paris, which devours as many masterpieces as absurdities, the provinces can hardly be deprived of them. So, as soon as the *lion* paraded Paris with his mane, his beard and mustaches, his waistcoats and his eyeglass, maintained in its place, without the help of his hands, by the contraction of his cheek and eye-socket, the chief towns of some departments had their sub-lions, who protested by the

smartness of their trousers-straps against the untidiness of their fellow-townsmen.

Thus, in 1834, Besançon could boast of a *lion*, in the person of Monsieur Amédée-Sylvain de Soulas, spelled Souleyas at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is perhaps the only man in Besançon descended from a Spanish family. Spain sent men to manage her business in the Comté, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulas remained in consequence of their connection with Cardinal Granvelle. Young Monsieur de Soulas was always talking of leaving Besançon, a dull town, church-going, and not literary, a military centre and garrison town, of which the manners and customs and physiognomy are worth describing. This opinion allowed of his lodging, like a man uncertain of the future, in three very scantily furnished rooms at the end of the Rue Neuve, just where it opens into the Rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not possibly live without a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a small servant aged fourteen, thickset, and named Babylas. The lion dressed his tiger very smartly—a short tunic-coat of iron-gray cloth, belted with patent-leather, bright blue plush breeches, a red waistcoat, polished leather top-boots, a shiny hat with black lacing, and brass buttons with the arms of Soulas. Amédée gave this boy white cotton gloves and his washing, and thirty-six francs a month to keep himself—a sum that seemed enormous to the grisettes of Besançon: four hundred and twenty francs a year to a child of fifteen, without counting extras! The extras consisted in the price for which he could sell his turned clothes, a present when Soulas exchanged one of his horses, and the perquisite of the manure. The two horses, treated with sordid economy, cost, one with another, eight hundred francs a year. His bills for articles received from Paris, such as perfumery, cravats, jewelry, patent blacking, and clothes, ran to another twelve hundred francs. Add to this the groom, or tiger, the horses, a very superior style of dress,

and six hundred francs a year for rent, and you will see a grand total of three thousand francs.

Now, Monsieur de Soulas' father had left him only four thousand francs a year, the income from some cottage farms in rather bad repair, which required keeping up, a charge which lent painful uncertainty to the rents. The lion had hardly three francs a day left for food, amusements, and gambling. He very often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was positively obliged to dine at his own cost, he sent his tiger to fetch a couple of dishes from a cookshop, never spending more than twenty-five sous.

Young Monsieur de Soulas was supposed to be a spendthrift, recklessly extravagant, whereas the poor man made the two ends meet in the year with a keenness and skill which would have done honor to a thrifty housewife. At Besançon in those days no one knew how great a tax on a man's capital were six francs spent in polish to spread on his boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous a pair, cleaned in the deepest secrecy to make them three times renewed, cravats costing ten francs, and lasting three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers fitting close to the boots. How could he do otherwise, since we see women in Paris bestowing their special attention on simpletons who visit them, and cut out the most remarkable men by means of these frivolous advantages, which a man can buy for fifteen louis, and get his hair curled and a fine linen shirt into the bargain?

If this unhappy youth should seem to you to have become a *lion* on very cheap terms, you must know that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland, by coach and in short stages, twice to Paris, and once from Paris to England. He passed as a well-informed traveller, and could say, "In England, where I went . . ." The dowagers of the town would say to him, "You, who have been in England . . ." He had been as far as Lombardy, and seen the shores of the Italian lakes. He read new

books. Finally, when he was cleaning his gloves, the tiger Babylas replied to callers, "Monsieur is very busy." An attempt had been made to withdraw Monsieur Amédée de Soulas from circulation by pronouncing him "A man of advanced ideas." Amédée had the gift of uttering with the gravity of a native the commonplaces that were in fashion, which gave him the credit of being one of the most enlightened of the nobility. His person was garnished with fashionable trinkets, and his head furnished with ideas hall-marked by the press.

In 1834, Amédée was a young man of five-and-twenty, of medium height, dark, with a very prominent thorax, well-made shoulders, rather plump legs, feet already fat, white dimpled hands, a beard under his chin, mustaches worthy of the garrison, a good natured, fat, rubicund face, a flat nose, and brown expressionless eyes; nothing Spanish about him. He was progressing rapidly in the direction of obesity, which would be fatal to his pretensions. His nails were well kept, his beard trimmed, the smallest details of his dress attended to with English precision. Hence Amédée de Soulas was looked upon as the finest man in Besançon. A hairdresser who waited upon him at a fixed hour—another luxury, costing sixty francs a year—held him up as the sovereign authority in matters of fashion and elegance.

Amédée slept late, dressed and went out toward noon, to go to one of his farms and practice pistol-shooting. He attached as much importance to this exercise as Lord Byron did in his later days. Then at three o'clock he came home, admired on horseback by the grisettes and the ladies who happened to be at their windows. After an affectation of study or business, which seemed to engage him till four, he dressed to dine out, spent the evening in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy of Besançon playing whist, and went home to bed at eleven. No life could be more aboveboard, more prudent, or more irreproachable, for he punctually attended the services at church on Sundays and holy days.

To enable you to understand how exceptional is such a life, it is necessary to devote a few words to an account of Besançon. No town ever offered more deaf and dumb resistance to progress. At Besançon the officials, the employés, the military, in short, every one engaged in governing it, sent thither from Paris to fill a post of any kind, are all spoken of by the expressive general name of *the Colony*. The colony is neutral ground, the only ground where, as in church, the upper rank and the townfolk of the place can meet. Here, fired by a word, a look, or gesture, are started those feuds between house and house, between a woman of rank and a citizen's wife, which endure till death, and widen the impassable gulf which parts the two classes of society. With the exception of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, the Beauffremont, the de Scey, and the Gramont families, with a few others who come only to stay on their estates in the Comté, the aristocracy of Besançon dates no further back than a couple of centuries, the time of the conquest by Louis XIV. This little world is essentially of the *parlement*, and arrogant, stiff, solemn, uncompromising, haughty beyond all comparison, even with the Court of Vienna, for in this the nobility of Besançon would put the Viennese drawing-rooms to shame. As to Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the town, they are never mentioned, no one thinks about them. The marriages in these families are arranged in the cradle, so rigidly are the greatest things settled as well as the smallest. No stranger, no intruder, ever finds his way into one of these houses, and to obtain an introduction for the colonels or officers of title belonging to the first families in France when quartered there requires efforts of diplomacy which Prince Talleyrand would gladly have mastered to use at a congress.

In 1834 Amédée was the only man in Besançon who wore trouser-straps; this will account for the young man's being regarded as a lion. And a little anecdote will enable you to understand the city of Besançon.

Some time before the opening of this story, the need arose at the préfecture for bringing an editor from Paris for the official newspaper, to enable it to hold its own against the little "Gazette," dropped at Besançon by the great "Gazette," and the "Patriot," which frisked in the hands of the Republicans. Paris sent them a young man, knowing nothing about la Franche Comté, who began by writing them a leading article of the school of the *Charivari*. The chief of the moderate party, a member of the municipal council, sent for the journalist and said to him, "You must understand, Monsieur, that we are serious, more than serious—tiresome; we resent being amused, and are furious at having been made to laugh. Be as hard of digestion as the toughest disquisitions in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' and you will hardly reach the level of Besançon."

The editor took the hint, and thenceforth spoke the most incomprehensible philosophical lingo. His success was complete.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not fall in the esteem of Besançon society, it was out of pure vanity on its part; the aristocracy were happy to affect a modern air, and to be able to show any Parisians of rank who visited the Comté a young man who bore some likeness to them.

All this hidden labor, all this dust thrown in people's eyes, this display of folly and latent prudence, had an object, or the *lion* of Besançon would have been no son of the soil. Amédée wanted to achieve a good marriage by proving some day that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had some savings. He wanted to be the talk of the town, to be the finest and best-dressed man there, in order to win first the attention, and then the hand, of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, at the time when young Monsieur de Soulas was setting up in business as a dandy, Rosalie was but fourteen. Hence, in 1834, Mademoiselle de Watteville had reached the age when young persons are easily struck by the peculiarities

which attracted the attention of the town to Amédée. There are many *lions* who become *lions* out of self-interest and speculation. The Wattevilles, who for twelve years had been drawing an income of fifty thousand francs, did not spend more than four-and-twenty thousand francs a year, while receiving all the upper circle of Besançon every Monday and Friday: on Monday they gave a dinner, on Fridays an evening party. Thus, in twelve years, what a sum must have accumulated from twenty-six thousand francs a year, saved and invested with the judgment that distinguishes those old families! It was very generally supposed that Madame de Watteville, thinking she had land enough, had placed her savings in the three per cents in 1830. Rosalie's dowry would therefore, as the best informed opined, amount to about twenty thousand francs a year. So for the last five years Amédée had worked like a mole to get into the highest favor of the severe Baroness, while laying himself out to flatter Mademoiselle de Watteville's conceit.

Madame de Watteville was in the secret of the devices by which Amédée succeeded in keeping up his rank in Besançon, and esteemed him highly for it. Soulas had placed himself under her wing when she was thirty, and at that time had dared to admire her and make her his idol; he had got so far as to be allowed—he alone in the world—to pour out to her all the unseemly gossip which almost all very precise women love to hear, being authorized by their superior virtue to look into the gulf without falling, and into the devil's snares without being caught. Do you understand why the lion did not allow himself the very smallest intrigue? He lived a public life, in the street so to speak, on purpose to play the part of a lover sacrificed to duty by the Baroness, and to feast her mind with the sins she had forbidden to her senses. A man who is so privileged as to be allowed to pour light stories into the ear of a bigot is in her eyes a charming man. If this exemplary youth had better known the human heart, he might without risk have allowed himself some flirtations among the

grisettes of Besançon who looked up to him as a king; his affairs might perhaps have been all the more hopeful with the strict and prudish Baroness. To Rosalie our Cato affected prodigality; he professed a life of elegance, showing her in perspective the splendid part played by a woman of fashion in Paris, whither he meant to go as Deputé.

All these manœuvres were crowned with complete success. In 1834 the mothers of the forty noble families composing the high society of Besançon quoted Monsieur Amédée de Soulas as the most charming young man in the town; no one would have dared to dispute his place as cock of the walk at the Hôtel de Rupt, and all Besançon regarded him as Rosalie de Watteville's future husband. There had even been some exchange of ideas on the subject between the Baroness and Amédée, to which the Baron's apparent nonentity gave some certainty.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, to whom her enormous prospective fortune at that time lent considerable importance, had been brought up exclusively within the precincts of the Hotel de Rupt—which her mother rarely quitted, so devoted was she to her dear Archbishop—and severely repressed by an exclusively religious education, and by her mother's despotism, which held her rigidly to principles. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Is it knowledge to have learned geography from Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France, and the four rules, all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit? Dancing and music were forbidden, as being more likely to corrupt life than to grace it. The Baroness taught her daughter every conceivable stitch in tapestry and women's work—plain sewing, embroidery, netting. At seventeen Rosalie had never read anything but the "Lettres édifiantes," and some works on heraldry. No newspaper had ever defiled her sight. She attended mass at the Cathedral every morning, taken there by her mother, came back to breakfast, did needlework after a little walk in the garden, and received visitors, sitting with the Baroness until dinner-time. Then, after dinner, except-

ing on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to other houses to spend the evening, without being allowed to talk more than the maternal rule permitted.

At eighteen Mademoiselle de Watteville was a slight, thin girl with a flat figure, fair, colorless, and insignificant to the last degree. Her eyes, of a very light blue, borrowed beauty from their lashes, which, when downcast, threw a shadow on her cheeks. A few freckles marred the whiteness of her forehead, which was shapely enough. Her face was exactly like those of Albert Dürer's saints, or those of the painters before Perugino; the same plump, though slender modelling, the same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, the same severe guilelessness. Everything about her, even to her attitude, was suggestive of those virgins, whose beauty is only revealed in its mystical radiance to the eyes of the studious connoisseur. She had fine hands though red, and a pretty foot, the foot of an aristocrat.

She habitually wore simple checked cotton dresses; but on Sundays and in the evening her mother allowed her silk. The cut of her frocks, made at Besançon, almost made her ugly, while her mother tried to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from Paris fashions; for through Monsieur de Soulas she procured the smallest trifles of her dress from thence. Rosalie had never worn a pair of silk stockings or thin boots, but always cotton stockings and leather shoes. On high days she was dressed in a muslin frock, her hair plainly dressed, and had bronze kid shoes.

This education, and her own modest demeanor, hid in Rosalie a spirit of iron. Physiologists and profound observers will tell you, perhaps to your great astonishment, that tempers, characteristics, wit, or genius reappear in families at long intervals, precisely like what are known as hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes skips over two generations. We have an illustrious example of this phenomenon in George Sand, in whom are resuscitated the force, the power, and the imaginative fac-

ulty of the Maréchal de Saxe, whose natural granddaughter she is.

The decisive character and romantic daring of the famous Watteville had reappeared in the soul of his grandniece, reinforced by the tenacity and pride of blood of the Rupts. But these qualities—or faults, if you will have it so—were as deeply buried in this young girlish soul, apparently so weak and yielding, as the seething lavas within a hill before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone, perhaps, suspected this inheritance from two strains. She was so severe to her Rosalie, that she replied one day to the Archbishop, who blamed her for being too hard on the child, "Leave me to manage her, Monseigneur. I know her! She has more than one Beelzebub in her skin!"

The Baroness kept all the keener watch over her daughter, because she considered her honor as a mother to be at stake. After all, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, at this time five-and-thirty, and as good as widowed, with a husband who turned egg-cups in every variety of wood, who set his mind on making wheels with six spokes out of ironwood, and manufactured snuff-boxes for every one of his acquaintance, flirted in strict propriety with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was in the house, she alternately dismissed and recalled her daughter, and tried to detect symptoms of jealousy in that youthful soul, so as to have occasion to repress them. She imitated the police in its dealings with the republicans; but she labored in vain. Rosalie showed no symptoms of rebellion. Then the arid bigot accused her daughter of perfect insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be sure that if she had thought young Monsieur de Soulas *nice*, she would have drawn down on herself a smart reproof. Thus, to all her mother's incitement she replied merely by such phrases as are wrongly called Jesuitical—wrongly, because the Jesuits were strong, and such reservations are the *chevaux-de-frise* behind which weakness takes refuge. Then the mother regarded the girl as a dis-

sembler. If by mischance a spark of the true nature of the Wattevilles and the Rupts blazed out, the mother armed herself with the respect due from children to their parents to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience.

This covert battle was carried on, in the most secret seclusion of domestic life, with closed doors. The Vicar-General, the dear Abbé Grancey, the friend of the late Archbishop, clever as he was in his capacity of the chief Father Confessor of the diocese, could not discover whether the struggle had stirred up some hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother were jealous in anticipation, or whether the court Amédée was paying to the girl through her mother had not overstepped its due limits. Being a friend of the family, neither mother nor daughter confessed to him. Rosalie, a little too much harried, morally, about young de Soulas, could not abide him, to use a homely phrase, and when he spoke to her, trying to take her heart by surprise, she received him but coldly. This aversion, discerned only by her mother's eye, was a constant subject of admonition.

"Rosalie, I cannot imagine why you affect such coldness toward Amédée. Is it because he is a friend of the family, and because we like him—your father and I?"

"Well, mamma," replied the poor child one day, "if I made him welcome, should I not be still more in the wrong?"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Madame de Watteville. "What is the meaning of such words? Your mother is unjust, no doubt, and, according to you, would be so in any case! Never let such an answer pass your lips again to your mother—" and so forth.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters. Rosalie noted the time. Her mother, pale with fury, sent her to her room, where Rosalie pondered on the meaning of this scene without discovering it, so guileless was she. Thus young Monsieur de Soulas, who was supposed by every one to be very near the end he was aiming at, all neck-

cloths set, and by dint of pots of patent blacking—an end which required so much waxing of his mustaches, so many smart waistcoats, wore out so many horseshoes and stays—for he wore a leather vest, the stays of the *lion*—Amédée, I say, was further away than any chance comer, although he had on his side the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey.

"Madame," said Monsieur de Soulas, addressing the Baroness, while waiting till his soup was cool enough to swallow, and affecting to give a romantic turn to his narrative, "one fine morning the mail-coach dropped at the Hotel National a gentleman from Paris, who, after seeking apartments, made up his mind in favor of the first floor in Mademoiselle Galard's house, Rue du Perron. Then the stranger went straight to the Mairie, and had himself registered as a resident with all political qualifications. Finally, he had his name entered on the list of barristers to the Court, showing his title in due form, and he left his card on all his new colleagues, the Ministerial officials, the Councillors of the Court, and the members of the bench, with the name 'ALBERT SAVARON.'"

"The name of Savaron is famous," said Mademoiselle de Watteville, who was strong in heraldic information. "The Savarons of Savarus are one of the oldest, noblest, and richest families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman, and no man's son," replied Amédée de Soulas. "If he wishes to bear the arms of the Savarons of Savarus, he must add a bar-sinister. There is no one left of the Brabant family but a Mademoiselle de Savarus, a rich heiress, and unmarried."

"The bar-sinister is, of course, the badge of a bastard; but the bastard of a Comte de Savarus is noble," answered Rosalie.

"Enough, that will do, Mademoiselle!" said the Baroness.

"You insisted on her learning heraldry," said Monsieur de Watteville, "and she knows it very well."

"Go on, I beg, Monsieur de Soulas."

"You may suppose that in a town where everything is classified, known, pigeon-holed, ticketed, and numbered, as in Besançon, Albert Savaron was received without hesitation by the lawyers of the town. They were satisfied to say, 'Here is a man who does not know his Besançon. Who the devil can have sent him here? What can he hope to do? Sending his card to the Judges instead of calling in person! What a blunder!' And so, three days after, Savaron had ceased to exist. He took as his servant old Monsieur Galard's man—Galard being dead—Jérôme, who can cook a little. Albert Savaron was all the more completely forgotten, because no one had seen him or met him anywhere."

"Then, does he not go to mass?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"He goes on Sundays to Saint-Pierre, but to the early service at eight in the morning. He rises every night between one and two in the morning, works till eight, has his breakfast, and then goes on working. He walks in his garden, going round fifty, or perhaps sixty times; then he goes in, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven."

"How did you learn all that?" Madame de Chavoncourt asked Monsieur de Soulas.

"In the first place, Madame, I live in the Rue Neuve, at the corner of the Rue du Perron; I look out on the house where this mysterious personage lodges; then, of course, there are communications between my tiger and Jérôme."

"And you gossip with Babylas?"

"What would you have me do out riding?"

"Well—and how was it that you engaged a stranger for your defence?" asked the Baroness, thus placing the conversation in the hands of the Vicar-General.

"The President of the Court played this pleader a trick by appointing him to defend at the Assizes a half-witted peasant accused of forgery. But Monsieur Savaron procured the poor man's acquittal by proving his innocence and showing that he had been a tool in the hands of the

real culprits. Not only did his line of defence succeed, but it led to the arrest of two of the witnesses, who were proved guilty and condemned. His speech struck the Court and the jury. One of these, a merchant, placed a difficult case next day in the hands of Monsieur Savaron, and he won it. In the position in which we found ourselves, Monsieur Berryer finding it impossible to come to Besançon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised him to employ this Monsieur Albert Savaron, foretelling our success. As soon as I saw him and heard him, I felt faith in him, and I was not wrong."

"Is he then so extraordinary?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Certainly, Madame," replied the Vicar-General.

"Well, tell us about it," said Madame de Watteville.

"The first time I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in his outer room next the anteroom—old Galard's drawing-room—which he has had painted like old oak, and which I found to be entirely lined with law-books, arranged on shelves also painted as old oak. The painting and the books are the sole decoration of the room, for the furniture consists of an old writing-table of carved wood, six old armchairs covered with tapestry, window curtains of gray stuff bordered with green, and a green carpet over the floor. The anteroom stove heats this library as well. As I waited there I did not picture my advocate as a young man. But this singular setting is in perfect harmony with his person; for Monsieur Savaron came out in a black merino dressing-gown tied with a red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat, and a red smoking-cap."

"The devil's colors!" exclaimed Madame de Watteville.

"Yes," said the Abbé; "but a magnificent head. Black hair already streaked with a little gray, hair like that of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in pictures, with thick shining curls, hair as stiff as horsehair; a round white throat like a woman's; a splendid forehead, furrowed by the strong median line which great schemes, great thoughts, deep

meditations stamp on a great man's brow; an olive complexion marbled with red, a square nose, eyes of flame, hollow cheeks, with two long lines betraying much suffering, a mouth with a sardonic smile, and a small chin, narrow, and too short; crows' feet on his temples; deep-set eyes, moving in their sockets like burning balls; but, in spite of all these indications of a violently passionate nature, his manner was calm, deeply resigned, and his voice of penetrating sweetness, which surprised me in Court by its easy flow; a true orator's voice, now clear and appealing, sometimes insinuating, but a voice of thunder when needful, and lending itself to sarcasm to become incisive.

"Monsieur Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. And his hands are those of a prelate.

"The second time I called on him he received me in his bedroom, adjoining the library, and smiled at my astonishment when I saw there a wretched chest of drawers, a shabby carpet, a camp-bed, and cotton window-curtains. He came out of his private room, to which no one is admitted, as Jérome informed me; the man did not go in, but merely knocked at the door.

"The third time he was breakfasting in his library on the most frugal fare; but on this occasion, as he had spent the night studying our documents, as I had my attorney with me, and as that worthy Monsieur Girardet is long-winded, I had leisure to study the stranger. He certainly is no ordinary man. There is more than one secret behind that face, at once so terrible and so gentle, patient and yet impatient, broad and yet hollow. I saw, too, that he stooped a little, like all men who have some heavy burden to bear."

"Why did so eloquent a man leave Paris? For what purpose did he come to Besançon?" asked pretty Madame de Chavoncourt. "Could no one tell him how little chance a stranger has of succeeding here? The good folk of Besançon will make use of him, but they will not allow him to make use of them. Why, having come, did he make

so little effort that it needed a freak of the President's to bring him forward?"

"After carefully studying that fine head," said the Abbé, looking keenly at the lady who had interrupted him, in such a way as to suggest that there was something he would not tell, "and especially after hearing him this morning reply to one of the bigwigs of the Paris Bar, I believe that this man, who may be five-and-thirty, will by and by make a great sensation."

"Why should we discuss him? You have gained your action, and paid him," said Madame de Watteville, watching her daughter, who, all the time the Vicar-General had been speaking, seemed to hang on his lips.

The conversation changed, and no more was heard of Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the cleverest of the Vicars-General of the diocese had all the greater charm for Rosalie because there was a romance behind it. For the first time in her life she had come across the marvellous, the exceptional, which smiles on every youthful imagination, and which curiosity, so eager at Rosalie's age, goes forth to meet half-way. What an ideal being was this Albert—gloomy, unhappy, eloquent, laborious, as compared by Mademoiselle de Watteville to that chubby fat Count, bursting with health, paying compliments, and talking of the fashions in the very face of the splendor of the old Counts of Rupt. Amédée had cost her many quarrels and scoldings, and, indeed, she knew him only too well; while this Albert Savaron offered many enigmas to be solved.

"Albert Savaron de Savarus," she repeated to herself.

Now, to see him, to catch sight of him! This was the desire of the girl to whom desire was hitherto unknown. She pondered in her heart, in her fancy, in her brain, the least phrases used by the Abbé de Grancey, for all his words had told.

"A fine forehead!" said she to herself, looking at the head of every man seated at the table; "I do not see one

fine one.—Monsieur de Soulas' is too prominent; Monsieur de Grancey's is fine, but he is seventy, and has no hair, it is impossible to see where his forehead ends."

"What is the matter, Rosalie; you are eating nothing?"

"I am not hungry, mamma," said she. "A prelate's hands—" she went on to herself. "I cannot remember our handsome Archbishop's hands, though he confirmed me."

Finally, in the midst of her coming and going in the labyrinth of her meditations, she remembered a lighted window she had seen from her bed, gleaming through the trees of the two adjoining gardens, when she had happened to wake in the night. . . . "Then that was his light!" thought she. "I might see him!—I will see him."

"Monsieur de Grancey, is the Chapter's lawsuit quite settled?" said Rosalie pointblank to the Vicar-General, during a moment of silence.

Madame de Watteville exchanged rapid glances with the Vicar-General.

"What can that matter to you, my dear child?" she said to Rosalie, with an affected sweetness which made her daughter cautious for the rest of her days.

"It might be carried to the Court of Appeal, but our adversaries will think twice about that," replied the Abbé.

"I never could have believed that Rosalie would think about a lawsuit all through a dinner," remarked Madame de Watteville.

"Nor I either," said Rosalie, in a dreamy way that made every one laugh. "But Monsieur de Grancey was so full of it that I was interested."

The company rose from table and returned to the drawing-room. All through the evening Rosalie listened in case Albert Savaron should be mentioned again; but beyond the congratulations offered by each new-comer to the Abbé on having gained his suit, to which no one added any praise of the advocate, no more was said about it. Mademoiselle de Watteville impatiently looked forward to bedtime. She had promised herself to wake at between two

and three in the morning, and to look at Albert's dressing-room windows. When the hour came, she felt almost pleasure in gazing at the glimmer from the lawyer's candles that shone through the trees, now almost bare of their leaves. By the help of the strong sight of a young girl, which curiosity seems to make longer, she saw Albert writing, and fancied she could distinguish the color of the furniture, which she thought was red. From the chimney above the roof rose a thick column of smoke.

"While all the world is sleeping, he is awake—like God!" thought she.

The education of girls brings with it such serious problems—for the future of a nation is in the mother—that the University of France long since set itself the task of having nothing to do with it. Here is one of these problems: Ought girls to be informed on all points? Ought their minds to be under restraint? It need not be said that the religious system is one of restraint. If you enlighten them, you make them demons before their time; if you keep them from thinking, you end in the sudden explosion so well shown by Molière in the character of Agnès, and you leave this suppressed mind, so fresh and clear-seeing, as swift and as logical as that of a savage, at the mercy of an accident. This inevitable crisis was brought on in Mademoiselle de Watteville by the portrait which one of the most prudent Abbés of the Chapter of Besançon imprudently allowed himself to sketch at a dinner party.

Next morning, Mademoiselle de Watteville, while dressing, necessarily looked out at Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the Hotel de Rupt.

"What would have become of me," thought she, "if he had lived anywhere else? Here I can, at any rate, see him. —What is he thinking about?"

Having seen this extraordinary man, though at a distance, the only man whose countenance stood forth in contrast with crowds of Besançon faces she had hitherto met with, Rosalie at once jumped at the idea of getting into

his home, of ascertaining the reasons of so much mystery, of hearing that eloquent voice, of winning a glance from those fine eyes. All this she set her heart on, but how could she achieve it?

All that day she drew her needle through her embroidery with the obtuse concentration of a girl who, like Agnès, seems to be thinking of nothing, but who is reflecting on things in general so deeply, that her artifice is unfailing. As a result of this profound meditation, Rosalie thought she would go to confession. Next morning, after mass, she had a brief interview with the Abbé Giroud at Saint-Pierre, and managed so ingeniously that the hour for her confession was fixed for Sunday morning at half-past seven, before the eight o'clock Mass. She committed herself to a dozen fibs in order to find herself, just for once, in the church at the hour when the lawyer came to Mass. Then she was seized with an impulse of extreme affection for her father; she went to see him in his workroom, and asked him for all sorts of information on the art of turning, ending by advising him to turn larger pieces, columns. After persuading her father to set to work on some twisted pillars, one of the difficulties of the turner's art, she suggested that he should make use of a large heap of stones that lay in the middle of the garden to construct a sort of grotto on which he might erect a little temple or Belvedere in which his twisted pillars could be used and shown off to all the world.

At the climax of the pleasure the poor unoccupied man derived from this scheme, Rosalie said, as she kissed him, "Above all, do not tell mamma who gave you the notion; she would scold me."

"Do not be afraid!" replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned as bitterly as his daughter under the tyranny of the terrible descendant of the Rupts.

So Rosalie had a certain prospect of seeing ere long a charming observatory built, whence her eye would command the lawyer's private room. And there are men for whose sake young girls can carry out such master-strokes of diplo-

macy, while, for the most part, like Albert Savaron, they know it not.

The Sunday so impatiently looked for arrived, and Rosalie dressed with such carefulness as made Mariette, the ladies'-maid, smile.

"It is the first time I ever knew Mademoiselle to be so fidgety," said Mariette.

"It strikes me," said Rosalie, with a glance at Mariette, which brought poppies to her cheeks, "that you too are more particular on some days than on others."

As she went down the steps, across the courtyard, and through the gates, Rosalie's heart beat, as everybody's does in anticipation of a great event. Hitherto, she had never known what it was to walk in the streets; for a moment she had felt as though her mother must read her schemes on her brow, and forbid her going to confession, and she now felt new blood in her feet, she lifted them as though she trod on fire. She had, of course, arranged to be with her confessor at a quarter-past eight, telling her mother eight, so as to have about a quarter of an hour near Albert. She got to church before Mass, and after a short prayer, went to see if the Abbé Giroud were in his confessional, simply to pass the time; and she thus placed herself in such a way as to see Albert as he came into church.

The man must have been atrociously ugly who did not seem handsome to Mademoiselle de Watteville in the frame of mind produced by her curiosity. And Albert Savaron, who was really very striking, made all the more impression on Rosalie because his mien, his walk, his carriage, everything down to his clothing, had the indescribable stamp which can only be expressed by the word Mystery.

He came in. The church, till now gloomy, seemed to Rosalie to be illuminated. The girl was fascinated by his slow and solemn demeanor, as of a man who bears a world on his shoulders, and whose deep gaze, whose very gestures, combine to express a devastating or absorbing thought. Rosalie now understood the Vicar-General's words in their

fullest extent. Yes, those eyes of tawny brown, shot with golden lights, covered an ardor which revealed itself in sudden flashes. Rosalie, with a recklessness which Mariette noted, stood in the lawyer's way, so as to exchange glances with him; and this glance turned her blood, for it seethed and boiled as though its warmth were doubled.

As soon as Albert had taken a seat, Mademoiselle de Watteville quickly found a place whence she could see him perfectly during all the time the Abbé might leave her. When Mariette said, "Here is Monsieur Giroud," it seemed to Rosalie that the interval had lasted no more than a few minutes. By the time she came out from the confessional, Mass was over. Albert had left the church.

"The Vicar-General was right," thought she. "*He* is unhappy. Why should this eagle—for he has the eyes of an eagle—swoop down on Besançon? Oh, I must know everything! But how?"

Under the smart of this new desire Rosalie set the stitches of her worsted-work with exquisite precision, and hid her meditations under a little innocent air, which shammed simplicity to deceive Madame de Watteville.

From that Sunday, when Mademoiselle de Watteville had met that look, or, if you please, received this baptism of fire—a fine expression of Napoleon's which may be well applied to love—she eagerly promoted the plan for the Belvedere.

"Mamma," said she one day when two columns were turned, "my father has taken a singular idea into his head; he is turning columns for a Belvedere he intends to erect on the heap of stones in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of it? It seems to me—"

"I approve of everything your father does," said Madame de Watteville dryly, "and it is a wife's duty to submit to her husband even if she does not approve of his ideas. Why should I object to a thing which is of no importance in itself, if only it amuses Monsieur de Watteville?"

"Well, because from thence we shall see into Monsieur

de Soulas' rooms, and Monsieur de Soulas will see us when we are there. Perhaps remarks may be made—"

"Do you presume, Rosalie, to guide your parents, and think you know more than they do of life and the proprieties?"

"I say no more, mamma. Besides, my father said that there would be a room in the grotto, where it would be cool, and where we can take coffee."

"Your father has had an excellent idea," said Madame de Watteville, who forthwith went to look at the columns.

She gave her entire approbation to the Baron de Watteville's design, while choosing for the erection of this monument a spot at the bottom of the garden, which could not be seen from Monsieur de Soulas' windows, but whence they could perfectly see into Albert Savaron's rooms. A builder was sent for, who undertook to construct a grotto, of which the top should be reached by a path three feet wide through the rock-work, where periwinkles would grow, iris, clematis, ivy, honeysuckle, and Virginia creeper. The Baroness desired that the inside should be lined with rustic woodwork, such as was then the fashion for flower-stands, with a looking-glass against the wall, an ottoman forming a box, and a table of inlaid bark. Monsieur de Soulas proposed that the floor should be of asphalt. Rosalie suggested a hanging chandelier of rustic wood.

"The Wattevilles are having something charming done in their garden," was rumored in Besançon.

"They are rich, and can afford a thousand crowns for a whim—"

"A thousand crowns!" exclaimed Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, a thousand crowns," cried young Monsieur de Soulas. "A man has been sent for from Paris to rusticate the interior, but it will be very pretty. Monsieur de Watteville himself is making the chandelier, and has begun to carve the wood."

"Berquet is to make a cellar under it," said an Abbé.

"No," replied young Monsieur de Soulas, "he is raising the kiosk on a concrete foundation, that it may not be damp."

"You know the very least things that are done in that house," said Madame de Chavoncourt sourly, as she looked at one of her great girls waiting to be married for a year past.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, with a little flush of pride in thinking of the success of her Belvedere, discerned in herself a vast superiority over every one about her. No one guessed that a little girl, supposed to be a witless goose, had simply made up her mind to get a closer view of the lawyer Savaron's private study.

Albert Savaron's brilliant defence of the Cathedral Chapter was all the sooner forgotten because the envy of other lawyers was aroused. Also, Savaron, faithful to his seclusion, went nowhere. Having no friends to cry him up, and seeing no one, he increased the chances of being forgotten which are common to strangers in such a town as Besançon. Nevertheless, he pleaded three times at the Commercial Tribunal in three knotty cases which had to be carried to the superior Court. He thus gained as clients four of the chief merchants of the place, who discerned in him so much good sense and sound legal purview that they placed their claims in his hands.

On the day when the Watteville family inaugurated the Belvedere, Savaron also was founding a monument. Thanks to the connections he had obscurely formed among the upper class of merchants in Besançon, he was starting a fortnightly paper, called the "Eastern Review," with the help of forty shares of five hundred francs each, taken up by his first ten clients, on whom he had impressed the necessity for promoting the interests of Besançon, the town where the traffic should meet between Mulhouse and Lyons, and the chief centre between Mulhouse and the Rhone.

To compete with Strasburg, was it not needful that Besançon should become a focus of enlightenment as well

as of trade? The leading questions relating to the interests of Eastern France could only be dealt with in a review. What a glorious task to rob Strasburg and Dijon of their literary importance, to bring light to the east of France, and compete with the centralizing influence of Paris! These reflections, put forward by Albert, were repeated by the ten merchants, who believed them to be their own.

Monsieur Savaron did not commit the blunder of putting his name in front; he left the finances of the concern to his chief client, Monsieur Boucher, connected by marriage with one of the great publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he kept the editorship, with a share of the profits as founder. The commercial interest appealed to Dôle, to Dijon, to Salins, to Neufchatel, to the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lous-le-Saulnier. The concurrence was invited of the learning and energy of every scientific student in the districts of le Bugey, la Bresse, and Franche-Comté. By the influence of commercial interests and common feeling, five hundred subscribers were booked in consideration of the low price: the "Review" cost eight francs a quarter.

To avoid hurting the conceit of the provincials by refusing their articles, the lawyer hit on the good idea of suggesting a desire for the literary management of this "Review" to Monsieur Boucher's eldest son, a young man of two-and-twenty, very eager for fame, to whom the snares and woes of literary responsibilities were utterly unknown. Albert quietly kept the upper hand, and made Alfred Boucher his devoted adherent. Alfred was the only man in Besançon with whom the king of the bar was on familiar terms. Alfred came in the morning to discuss the articles for the next number with Albert in the garden. It is needless to say that the trial number contained a "Meditation" by Alfred, which Savaron approved. In his conversations with Alfred, Albert would let drop some great ideas, subjects for articles of which Alfred availed himself. And thus the merchant's son fancied he was making capital out of the great man. To Alfred, Albert was a man of genius,

of profound politics. The commercial world, enchanted at the success of the "Review," had to pay up only three-tenths of their shares. Two hundred more subscribers, and the periodical would pay a dividend to the shareholders of five per cent, the editor remaining unpaid. This editing, indeed, was beyond price.

After the third number the "Review" was recognized for exchange by all the papers published in France, which Albert henceforth read at home. This third number included a tale signed "A. S.," and attributed to the famous lawyer. In spite of the small attention paid by the higher circle of Besançon to the "Review," which was accused of Liberal views, this, the first novel produced in the county, came under discussion that mid-winter at Madame de Chavoncourt's.

"Papa," said Rosalie, "a 'Review' is published in Besançon; you ought to take it in; and keep it in your room, for mamma would not let me read it, but you will lend it to me."

Monsieur de Watteville, eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who for the last five months had given him so many proofs of filial affection—Monsieur de Watteville went in person to subscribe for a year to the "Eastern Review," and lent the four numbers already out to his daughter. In the course of the night Rosalie devoured the tale—the first she had ever read in her life—but she had only known life for two months past. Hence the effect produced on her by this work must not be judged by ordinary rules. Without prejudice of any kind as to the greater or less merit of this composition from the pen of a Parisian who had thus imported into the province the manner, the brilliancy, if you will, of the new literary school, it could not fail to be a masterpiece to a young girl abandoning all her intelligence and her innocent heart to her first reading of this kind.

Also, from what she had heard said, Rosalie had by intuition conceived a notion of it which strangely enhanced the interest of this novel. She hoped to find in it the sentiments, and perhaps something of the life of Albert. From

the first pages this opinion took so strong a hold on her, that after reading the fragment to the end she was certain that it was no mistake. Here, then, is this confession, in which, according to the critics of Madame de Chavoncourt's drawing-room, Albert had imitated some modern writers who, for lack of inventiveness, relate their private joys, their private griefs, or the mysterious events of their own life.

AMBITION FOR LOVE'S SAKE

In 1823 two young men, having agreed as a plan for a holiday to make a tour through Switzerland, set out from Lucerne one fine morning in the month of July in a boat pulled by three oarsmen. They started for Fluelen, intending to stop at every notable spot on the lake of the Four Cantons. The views which shut in the waters on the way from Lucerne to Fluelen offer every combination that the most exacting fancy can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and rocks, brooks and pastures, trees and torrents. Here are austere solitudes and charming headlands, smiling and trimly kept meadows, forests crowning perpendicular granite cliffs like plumes, deserted but verdant reaches opening out, and valleys whose beauty seems the lovelier in the dreamy distance.

As they passed the pretty hamlet of Gersau, one of the friends looked for a long time at a wooden house which seemed to have been recently built, inclosed by a paling, and standing on a promontory, almost bathed by the waters. As the boat rowed past, a woman's head was raised against the background of the room on the upper story of this house, to admire the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men met the glance thus indifferently given by the unknown fair.

"Let us stop here," said he to his friend. "We meant to make Lucerne our headquarters for seeing Switzerland; you will not take it amiss, Léopold, if I change my mind and stay here to take charge of our possessions. Then you

can go where you please; my journey is ended. Pull to land, men, and put us out at this village; we will breakfast here. I will go back to Lucerne to fetch all our luggage, and before you leave you will know in which house I take a lodging, where you will find me on your return."

"Here or at Lucerne," replied Léopold, "the difference is not so great that I need hinder you from following your whim."

These two youths were friends in the truest sense of the word. They were of the same age; they had learned at the same school; and after studying the law, they were spending their holiday in the classical tour in Switzerland. Léopold, by his father's determination, was already pledged to a place in a notary's office in Paris. His spirit of rectitude, his gentleness, and the coolness of his senses and his brain, guaranteed him to be a docile pupil. Léopold could see himself a notary in Paris: his life lay before him like one of the high-roads that cross the plains of France, and he looked along its whole length with philosophical resignation.

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a strong contrast with Léopold's, and their antagonism had no doubt had the result of tightening the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a man of rank, who was carried off by a premature death before he could make any arrangements for securing the means of existence to a woman he fondly loved and to Rodolphe. Thus cheated by a stroke of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to a heroic measure. She sold everything she owed to the munificence of her child's father for a sum of more than a hundred thousand francs, bought with it a life annuity for herself at a high rate, and thus acquired an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to devote the whole of it to the education of her son, so as to give him all the personal advantages that might help to make his fortune, while saving, by strict economy, a small capital to be his when he came of age. It was bold; it was counting on her own life; but without this boldness the good mother

would certainly have found it impossible to live and to bring her child up suitably, and he was her only hope, her future, the spring of all her joys.

Rodolphe, the son of a most charming Parisian woman, and a man of mark, a nobleman of Brabant, was cursed with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had in everything shown a most ardent nature. In him mere desire became a guiding force and the motive power of his whole being, the stimulus to his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the pains taken by a clever mother, who was alarmed when she detected this predisposition, Rodolphe wished for things as a poet imagines, as a mathematician calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician creates melodies. Tender-hearted, like his mother, he dashed with inconceivable violence and impetus of thought after the object of his desires; he annihilated time. While dreaming of the fulfilment of his schemes, he always overlooked the means of attainment. "When my son has children," said his mother, "he will want them born grown up."

This fine frenzy, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to achieve his studies with brilliant results, and to become what the English call an accomplished gentleman. His mother was then proud of him, though still fearing a catastrophe if ever a passion should possess a heart at once so tender and so susceptible, so vehement and so kind. Therefore, the judicious mother had encouraged the friendship which bound Leopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, since she saw in the cold and faithful young notary a guardian, a comrade, who might to a certain extent take her place if by some misfortune she should be lost to her son. Rodolphe's mother, still handsome at three-and-forty, had inspired Léopold with an ardent passion. This circumstance made the two young men even more intimate.

So Léopold, knowing Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping at a village and giving up the projected journey to Saint-Gothard, on the strength of a single glance at the upper window of a house. While breakfast

was prepared for them at the Swan Inn, the friends walked round the hamlet and came to the neighborhood of the pretty new house; here, while gazing about him and talking to the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered the residence of some decent folk, who were willing to take him as a boarder, a very frequent custom in Switzerland. They offered him a bedroom looking over the lake and the mountains, and from whence he had a view of one of those immense sweeping reaches which, in this lake, are the admiration of every traveller. This house was divided by a roadway and a little creek from the new house, where Rodolphe had caught sight of the unknown fair one's face.

For a hundred francs a month Rodolphe was relieved of all thought for the necessaries of life. But, in consideration of the outlay the Stopfer couple expected to make, they bargained for three months' residence and a month's payment in advance. Rub a Swiss never so little, and you find the usurer. After breakfast, Rodolphe at once made himself at home by depositing in his room such property as he had brought with him for the journey to the Saint Gothard, and he watched Léopold as he set out, moved by the spirit of routine, to carry out the excursion for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a fallen rock on the shore, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he turned to examine the new house with stolen glances, hoping to see the fair unknown. Alas! he went in without its having given a sign of life. During dinner, in the company of Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, retired coopers from Neufchatel, he questioned them as to the neighborhood, and ended by learning all he wanted to know about the lady, thanks to his hosts' loquacity; for they were ready to pour out their budget of gossip without any pressing.

The fair stranger's name was Fanny Lovelace. This name (pronounced *Loveless*) is that of an old English family, but Richardson has given it to a creation whose fame eclipses all others! Miss Lovelace had come to settle by the lake for her father's health, the physicians having rec-

ommended him the air of Lucerne. These two English people had arrived with no other servant than a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child, much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited very intelligently, and had settled, two winters since, with Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, the retired head-gardeners of His Excellency Count Borromeo of Isola Bella and Isola Madre in the Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who were possessed of an income of about a thousand crowns a year, had let the top story of their house to the Lovelaces for three years at a rent of two hundred francs a year. Old Lovelace, a man of ninety, and much broken, was too poor to allow himself any gratifications, and very rarely went out; his daughter worked to maintain him, translating English books, and writing some herself, it was said. The Lovelaces could not afford to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses and guides to explore the neighborhood.

Poverty demanding such privation as this excites all the greater compassion among the Swiss, because it deprives them of a chance of profit. The cook of the establishment fed the three English boarders for a hundred francs a month inclusive. In Gersau it was generally believed, however, that the gardener and his wife, in spite of their pretensions, used the cook's name as a screen to net the little profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had made beautiful gardens round their house, and had built a hothouse. The flowers, the fruit, and the botanical rarities of this spot were what had induced the young lady to settle on it as she passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was said to be nineteen years old; she was the old man's youngest child, and the object of his adulation. About two months ago she had hired a piano from Lucerne, for she seemed to be crazy about music.

"She loves flowers and music, and she is unmarried!" thought Rodolphe; "what good luck!"

The next day Rodolphe went to ask leave to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to be some-

what famous. The permission was not immediately granted. The retired gardeners asked, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport; it was sent to them at once. The paper was not returned to him till next morning, by the hands of the cook, who expressed her master's pleasure in showing him their place. Rodolphe went to the Bergmanns, not without a certain trepidation, known only to persons of strong feelings, who go through as much passion in a moment as some men experience in a whole lifetime.

After dressing himself carefully to gratify the old gardeners of the Borromean Islands, whom he regarded as the warders of his treasure, he went all over the grounds, looking at the house now and again, but with much caution; the old couple treated him with evident distrust. But his attention was soon attracted by the little English deaf-mute, in whom his discernment, though young as yet, enabled him to recognize a girl of African, or at least of Sicilian, origin. The child had the golden-brown color of a Havana cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of very un-British length, hair blacker than black; and under this almost olive skin, sinews of extraordinary strength and feverish alertness. She looked at Rodolphe with amazing curiosity and effrontery, watching his every movement.

"To whom does that little Moresco belong?" he asked worthy Madame Bergmann.

"To the English," Monsieur Bergmann replied.

"But she never was born in England!"

"They may have brought her from the Indies," said Madame Bergmann.

"I have been told that Miss Lovelace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during the residence by the lake to which I am condemned by my doctor's orders, she would allow me to join her."

"They receive no one, and will not see anybody," said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having been invited into the house, or taken into the part of the

garden that lay between the front of the house and the shore of the little promontory. On that side the house had a balcony above the first floor, made of wood, and covered by the roof, which projected deeply like the roof of a chalet on all four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had loudly praised the elegance of this arrangement, and talked of the view from that balcony, but all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns it struck him that he was a simpleton, like any man of spirit and imagination disappointed of the results of a plan which he had believed would succeed.

In the evening he, of course, went out in a boat on the lake, round and about the spit of land, to Brunnen and to Schwytz, and came in at nightfall. From afar he saw the window open and brightly lighted; he heard the sound of a piano and the tones of an exquisite voice. He made the boatmen stop, and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening to an Italian air delightfully sung. When the singing ceased, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and rowers. At the cost of wetting his feet, he went to sit down under the water-worn granite shelf crowned by a thick hedge of thorny acacia, by the side of which ran a long lime avenue in the Bergmanns' garden. By the end of an hour he heard steps and voices just above him, but the words that reached his ears were all Italian, and spoken by two women.

He took advantage of the moment when the two speakers were at one end of the walk to slip noiselessly to the other. After half an hour of struggling he got to the end of the avenue, and there took up a position whence, without being seen or heard, he could watch the two women without being observed by them as they came toward him. What was Rodolphe's amazement on recognizing the deaf-mute as one of them; she was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian.

It was now eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect on the lake and around the dwelling that the

two women must have thought themselves safe; in all Gersau there could be no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe supposed that the girl's dumbness must be a necessary deception. From the way in which they both spoke Italian, Rodolphe suspected that it was the mother tongue of both girls, and concluded that the name of English also hid some disguise.

"They are Italian refugees," said he to himself, "outlaws in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young lady waits till it is dark to walk and talk in security."

He lay down by the side of the hedge, and crawled like a snake to find a way between two acacia shrubs. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or tearing deep scratches in his back, he got through the hedge when the so-called Miss Fanny and her pretended deaf-and-dumb maid were at the other end of the path; then, when they had come within twenty yards of him without seeing him, for he was in the shadow of the hedge, and the moon was shining brightly, he suddenly rose.

"Fear nothing," said he in French to the Italian girl, "I am not a spy. You are refugees, I have guessed that. I am a Frenchman whom one look from you has fixed at Gersau."

Rodolphe, startled by the acute pain caused by some steel instrument piercing his side, fell like a log.

"*Nel lago con pietra!*" said the terrible dumb girl.

"Oh, Gina!" exclaimed the Italian.

"She has missed me," said Rodolphe, pulling from the wound a stiletto, which had been turned by one of the false ribs. "But a little higher up it would have been deep in my heart.—I was wrong, Francesca," he went on, remembering the name he had heard little Gina repeat several times; "I owe her no grudge, do not scold her. The happiness of speaking to you is well worth the prick of a stiletto. Only show me the way out; I must get back to the Stopfers' house. Be easy; I shall tell nothing."

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped

Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls made him sit down on a bench and take off his coat, his waistcoat, and his cravat. Then Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound strongly. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaster, which she applied to the wound.

"You can walk now as far as your house," she said.

Each took an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a side gate, of which the key was in Francesca's apron pocket.

"Does Gina speak French?" said Rodolphe to Francesca.

"No. But do not excite yourself," replied Francesca with some impatience.

"Let me look at you," said Rodolphe pathetically, "for it may be long before I am able to come again—"

He leaned against one of the gate-posts contemplating the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to gaze at her for a moment under the sweetest silence and the sweetest night which ever, perhaps, shone on this lake, the king of Swiss lakes.

Francesca was quite of the classic Italian type, and such as imagination supposes or pictures, or, if you will, dreams, that Italian women are. What first struck Rodolphe was the grace and elegance of a figure evidently powerful, though so slender as to appear fragile. An amber paleness overspread her face, betraying sudden interest, but it did not dim the voluptuous glance of her liquid eyes of velvety blackness. A pair of hands as beautiful as ever a Greek sculptor added to the polished arms of a statue grasped Rodolphe's arm, and their whiteness gleamed against his black coat. The rash Frenchman could but just discern the long, oval shape of her face, and a melancholy mouth showing brilliant teeth between the parted lips, full, fresh, and brightly red. The exquisite lines of this face guaranteed to Francesca permanent beauty; but what most struck Rodolphe was the adorable freedom, the Italian

frankness of this woman, wholly absorbed as she was in her pity for him.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm as far as the Stopfers' door, and fled like a swallow as soon as she had rung.

"These patriots do not play at killing!" said Rodolphe to himself as he felt his sufferings when he found himself in his bed. "'*Nel lago!*' Gina would have pitched me into the lake with a stone tied to my neck."

Next day he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon there, and when he came, enjoined on him absolute secrecy, giving him to understand that his honor depended on it.

Léopold returned from his excursion on the day when his friend first got out of bed. Rodolphe made up a story, and begged him to go to Lucerne to fetch their luggage and letters. Léopold brought back the most fatal, the most dreadful news: Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on their way from Bâle to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, had reached Lucerne the day they left for Fluelen.

In spite of Léopold's utmost precautions, Rodolphe fell ill of a nervous fever. As soon as Léopold saw his friend out of danger, he set out for France with a power of attorney, and Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could grow calmer. The young Frenchman's position, his despair, the circumstances which made such a loss worse for him than for any other man, were known, and secured him the pity and interest of every one at Gersau. Every morning the pretended dumb girl came to see him and bring him news of her mistress.

As soon as Rodolphe could go out he went to the Bergmanns' house, to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had taken in his sorrow and his illness. For the first time since he had lodged with the Bergmanns the old Italian admitted a stranger to his room, where Rodolphe was received with the cordiality due to his misfor-

tunes and to his being a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of him. Francesca looked so lovely by candle-light that first evening that she shed a ray of brightness on his grieving heart. Her smiles flung the roses of hope on his woe. She sang, not indeed gay songs, but grave and solemn melodies suited to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he observed this touching care.

At about eight o'clock the old man left the young people without any sign of uneasiness, and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she led Rodolphe on to the balcony, whence they perceived the sublime scenery of the lake, and signed to him to be seated by her on a rustic wooden bench.

"Am I very indiscreet in asking how old you are cara Francesca?" said Rodolphe.

"Nineteen," said she, "well past."

"If anything in the world could soothe my sorrow," he went on, "it would be the hope of winning you from your father, whatever your fortune may be. So beautiful as you are, you seem to me richer than a prince's daughter. And I tremble as I confess to you the feelings with which you have inspired me; but they are deep—they are eternal."

"*Zitto!*" said Francesca, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips. "Say no more: I am not free. I have been married these three years."

For a few minutes utter silence reigned. When the Italian girl, alarmed at Rodolphe's stillness, went close to him, she found that he had fainted.

"*Povero!*" she said to herself. "And I thought him cold."

She fetched some salts, and revived Rodolphe by making him smell at them.

"Married!" said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. And then his tears flowed freely.

"Child!" said she. "But there still is hope. My husband is—"

"Eighty?" Rodolphe put in.

"No," said she with a smile, "but sixty-five. He has disguised himself as much older to mislead the police."

"Dearest," said Rodolphe, "a few more shocks of this kind and I shall die. Only when you have known me twenty years will you understand the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations for happiness. This plant," he went on, pointing to the yellow jasmine which covered the balustrade, "does not climb more eagerly to spread itself in the sunbeams than I have clung to you for this month past. I love you with unique passion. That love will be the secret fount of my life—I may possibly die of it."

"Oh! Frenchman, Frenchman!" said she, emphasizing her exclamation with a little incredulous grimace.

"Shall I not be forced to wait, to accept you at the hands of time?" said he gravely. "But know this; if you are in earnest in what you have allowed to escape you, I will wait for you faithfully, without suffering any other attachment to grow up in my heart."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"None," said he, "not even a passing fancy. I have my fortune to make; you must have a splendid one, nature created you a princess—"

At this word Francesca could not repress a faint smile, which gave her face the most bewitching expression, something subtle, like what the great Leonardo has so well depicted in the "Gioconda." This smile made Rodolphe pause. "Ah yes!" he went on, "you must suffer much from the destitution to which exile has brought you. Oh, if you would make me happy above all men, and consecrate my love, you would treat me as a friend. Ought I not to be your friend?—My poor mother has left sixty thousand francs of savings; take half."

Francesca looked steadily at him. This piercing gaze went to the bottom of Rodolphe's soul.

"We want nothing; my work amply supplies our luxuries," she replied in a grave voice.

"And can I endure that a Francesca should work?"

cried he. "One day you will return to your country and find all you left there." Again the Italian girl looked at Rodolphe. "And you will then repay me what you may have condescended to borrow," he added, with an expression full of delicate feeling.

"Let us drop this subject," said she, with incomparable dignity of gesture, expression, and attitude. "Make a splendid fortune, be one of the remarkable men of your country; that is my desire. Fame is a drawbridge which may serve to cross a deep gulf. Be ambitious if you must. I believe you have great and powerful talents, but use them rather for the happiness of mankind than to deserve me; you will be all the greater in my eyes."

In the course of this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered that Francesca was an enthusiast for Liberal ideas, and for that worship of liberty which had led to the three revolutions in Naples, Piémont, and Spain. On leaving, he was shown to the door by Gina, the so called mute. At eleven o'clock no one was astir in the village, there was no fear of listeners; Rodolphe took Gina into a corner, and asked her in a low voice and bad Italian, "Who are your master and mistress, child? Tell me, I will give you this fine new gold piece."

"Monsieur," said the girl, taking the coin, "my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution, and the conspirator of all others whom Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg."

"A bookseller's wife! Ah, so much the better," thought he; "we are on an equal footing.—And what is her family?" he added, "for she looks like a queen."

"All Italian women do," replied Gina proudly. "Her father's name is Colonna."

Emboldened by Francesca's modest rank, Rodolphe had an awning fitted to his boat and cushions in the stern. When this was done, the lover came to propose to Francesca to come out on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to carry out her part of a young English Miss in the

eyes of the villagers, but she brought Gina with her. Francesca Colonna's lightest actions betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which she took her place at the end of the boat Rodolphe felt himself in some sort cut off from her, and, in the face of a look of pride worthy of an aristocrat, the familiarity he had intended fell dead. By a glance Francesca made herself a princess, with all the prerogatives she might have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have read the thoughts of this vassal who was so audacious as to constitute himself her protector.

Already, in the furniture of the room where Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the various trifles she made use of, Rodolphe had detected indications of a superior character and a fine fortune. All these observations now recurred to his mind; he became thoughtful after having been trampled on, as it were, by Francesca's dignity. Gina, her half-grown-up *confidante*, also seemed to have a mocking expression as she gave a covert or a side glance at Rodolphe. This obvious disagreement between the Italian lady's rank and her manners was a fresh puzzle to Rodolphe, who suspected some further trick like Gina's assumed dumbness.

"Where would you go, Signora Lamporani?" he asked.

"Toward Lucerne," replied Francesca in French.

"Good!" said Rodolphe to himself, "she is not startled by hearing me speak her name; she had, no doubt, foreseen that I should ask Gina—she is so cunning.—What is your quarrel with me?" he went on, going at last to sit down by her side, and asking her by a gesture to give him her hand, which she withdrew. "You are cold and ceremonious; what, in colloquial language, we should call *short*."

"It is true," she replied with a smile. "I am wrong. It is not good manners; it is vulgar. In French you would call it inartistic. It is better to be frank than to harbor cold or hostile feelings toward a friend, and you have already proved yourself my friend. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me to be a very ordinary

woman."—Rodolphe made many signs of denial.—"Yes," said the bookseller's wife, going on without noticing this pantomime, which, however, she plainly saw, "I have detected that, and naturally I have reconsidered my conduct. Well! I will put an end to everything by a few words of deep truth. Understand this, Rodolphe: I feel in myself the strength to stifle a feeling if it were not in harmony with my ideas or anticipation of what true love is. I could love —as we can love in Italy, but I know my duty. No intoxication can make me forget it. Married without my consent to that poor old man, I might take advantage of the liberty he so generously gives me; but three years of married life imply acceptance of its laws. Hence the most vehement passion would never make me utter, even involuntarily, a wish to find myself free.

"Emilio knows my character. He knows that without my heart, which is my own, and which I might give away, I should never allow any one to take my hand. That is why I have just refused it to you. I desire to be loved and waited for with fidelity, nobleness, ardor, while all I can give is infinite tenderness of which the expression may not overstep the boundary of the heart, the permitted neutral ground. All this being thoroughly understood—Oh!" she went on with a girlish gesture, "I will be as coquettish, as gay, as glad, as a child which knows nothing of the dangers of familiarity."

This plain and frank declaration was made in a tone, an accent, and supported by a look which gave it the deepest stamp of truth.

"A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Is that," she answered with some haughtiness, "a reflection on the humbleness of my birth? Must your love flaunt a coat-of-arms? At Milan the noblest names are written over shop-doors: Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini; there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe me, though I keep a shop, I have the feelings of a duchess."

"A reflection? Nay, Madame, I meant it for praise."

"By a comparison?" she said archly.

"Ah, once for all," said he, "not to torture me if my words should ill express my feelings, understand that my love is perfect; it carries with it absolute obedience and respect."

She bowed as a woman satisfied, and said, "Then Monsieur accepts the treaty?"

"Yes," said he. "I can understand that in a rich and powerful feminine nature the faculty of loving ought not to be wasted, and that you, out of delicacy, wished to restrain it. Ah! Francesca, at my age tenderness requited, and by so sublime, so royally beautiful a creature as you are—why, it is the fulfilment of all my wishes. To love you as you desire to be loved—is not that enough to make a young man guard himself against every evil folly? Is it not to concentrate all his powers in a noble passion, of which in the future he may be proud, and which can leave none but lovely memories? If you could but know with what hues you have clothed the chain of Pilatus, the Rigi, and this superb lake—"

"I want to know," said she, with the Italian artlessness which has always a touch of artfulness.

"Well, this hour will shine on all my life like a diamond on a queen's brow."

Francesca's only reply was to lay her hand on Rodolphe's.

"Oh, dearest! forever dearest!—Tell me, have you never loved?"

"Never."

"And you allow me to love you nobly, looking to heaven for the utmost fulfilment?" he asked.

She gently bent her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe's cheeks.

"Why! what is the matter?" she cried, abandoning her imperial manner.

"I have now no mother whom I can tell of my happiness; she left this earth without seeing what would have mitigated her agony—"

"What?" said she.

"Her tenderness replaced by an equal tenderness—"

"*Povero mio!*" exclaimed the Italian, much touched. "Believe me," she went on after a pause, "it is a very sweet thing, and to a woman, a strong element of fidelity to know that she is all in all on earth to the man she loves; to find him lonely, with no family, with nothing in his heart but his love—in short, to have him wholly to herself."

When two lovers thus understand each other, the heart feels delicious peace, supreme tranquillity. Certainty is the basis for which human feelings crave, for it is never lacking to religious sentiment; man is always certain of being fully repaid by God. Love never believes itself secure but by this resemblance to divine love. And the raptures of that moment must have been fully felt to be understood; it is unique in life; it can never return, no more, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman, to make her your human religion, the fount of life, the secret luminary of all your least thoughts!—is not this a second birth? And a young man mingles with this love a little of the feeling he had for his mother.

Rodolphe and Francesca for some time remained in perfect silence, answering each other by sympathetic glances full of thoughts. They understood each other in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenes of Nature, whose glories, interpreted by the glory in their hearts, helped to stamp on their minds the most fugitive details of that unique hour. There had not been the slightest shade of frivolity in Francesca's conduct. It was noble, large, and without any second thought. This magnanimity struck Rodolphe greatly, for in it he recognized the difference between the Italian and the Frenchwoman. The waters, the land, the sky, the woman, all were grandiose and suave, even their love in the midst of this picture, so vast in its expanse, so rich in detail, where the sternness of the snowy peaks and their hard folds, standing clearly out against the blue sky, re-

minded Rodolphe of the circumstances which limited his happiness: a lovely country shut in by snows.

This delightful intoxication of soul was destined to be disturbed. A boat was approaching from Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively, gave a joyful start, though faithful to her part as a mute. The bark came nearer; when at length Francesca could distinguish the faces on board, she exclaimed, "Tito!" as she perceived a young man. She stood up, and remained standing at the risk of being drowned. "Tito! Tito!" cried she, waving her handkerchief.

Tito desired the boatmen to slacken, and the two boats pulled side by side. The Italian and Tito talked with such extreme rapidity, and in a dialect unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew even the Italian of books, that Rodolphe could neither hear nor guess the drift of this conversation. But Tito's handsome face, Francesca's familiarity, and Gina's expression of delight, all aggrieved him. And indeed no lover can help being ill pleased at finding himself neglected for another, whoever he may be. Tito tossed a little leather bag to Gina, full of gold no doubt, and a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, with a farewell wave of the hand to Tito.

"Get quickly back to Gersau," she said to the boatmen. "I will not let my poor Emilio pine ten minutes longer than he need."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, as he saw Francesca finish reading the last letter.

"*La libertà!*" she exclaimed, with an artist's enthusiasm.

"*E denaro!*" added Gina, like an echo, for she had found her tongue.

"Yes," said Francesca, "no more poverty! For more than eleven months have I been working, and I was beginning to be tired of it. I am certainly not a literary woman."

"Who is this Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

"The Secretary of State to the financial department of

the humble shop of the Colonnas, in other words, the son of our *ragionato*. Poor boy! he could not come by the Saint-Gothard, nor by the Mont-Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseilles, and had to cross France. Well, in three weeks we shall be at Geneva, and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe," she added, seeing sadness overspread the Parisian's face, "is not the Lake of Geneva quite as good as the Lake of Lucerne?"

"But allow me to bestow a regret on the Bergmanns' delightful house," said Rodolphe, pointing to the little promontory.

"Come and dine with us to add to your associations, *povero mio*," said she. "This is a great day; we are out of danger. My mother writes that within a year there will be an amnesty. Oh! *la cara patria!*"

These three words made Gina weep. "Another winter here," said she, "and I should have been dead!"

"Poor little Sicilian kid!" said Francesca, stroking Gina's head with an expression and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, even if it were without love.

The boat grounded; Rodolphe sprang on to the sand, offered his hand to the Italian lady, escorted her to the door of the Bergmanns' house, and went to dress and return as soon as possible.

When he joined the librarian and his wife, who were sitting on the balcony, Rodolphe could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise at seeing the prodigious change which the good news had produced in the old man. He now saw a man of about sixty, extremely well preserved, a lean Italian, as straight as an I, with hair still black though thin and showing a white skull, with bright eyes, a full set of white teeth, a face like Cæsar, and on his diplomatic lips a sardonic smile, the almost false smile under which a man of good breeding hides his real feelings.

"Here is my husband under his natural form," said Francesca gravely.

"He is quite a new acquaintance," replied Rodolphe, bewildered.

"Quite," said the librarian; "I have played many a part, and know well how to make up. Ah! I played one in Paris under the Empire, with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantis *e tuttè quanti*. Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even the most futile, is of use. If my wife had not received a man's education—an unheard-of thing in Italy—I should have been obliged to chop wood to get my living here. *Povera* Francesca! who would have told me that she would some day maintain me!"

As he listened to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, so hale, Rodolphe scented some mystification, and preserved the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

"*Che avete, signor?*" Francesca asked with simplicity. "Does our happiness sadden you?"

"Your husband is a young man," he whispered in her ear.

She broke into such a frank, infectious laugh that Rodolphe was still more puzzled.

"He is but sixty-five, at your service," said she; "but I can assure you that even that is something—to be thankful for!"

"I do not like to hear you jest about an affection so sacred as this, of which you yourself prescribed the conditions."

"*Zitto!*" said she, stamping her foot, and looking whether her husband were listening. "Never disturb the peace of mind of that dear man, as simple as a child, and with whom I can do what I please. He is under my protection," she added. "If you could know with what generosity he risked his life and fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Is not that love, Monsieur Frenchman?—But they are like that in his family. Emilio's younger brother was deserted

for a handsome youth by the woman he loved. He thrust his sword through his own heart ten minutes after he had said to his servant, 'I could of course kill my rival, but it would grieve the *Diva* too deeply.' ''

This mixture of dignity and banter, of haughtiness and playfulness, made Francesca at this moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner and the evening were full of cheerfulness, justified, indeed, by the relief of the two refugees, but depressing to Rodolphe.

"Can she be fickle?" he asked himself as he returned to the Stopfers' house. "She sympathized in my sorrow, and I cannot take part in her joy!"

He blamed himself, justifying this girl-wife.

"She has no taint of hypocrisy, and is carried away by impulse," thought he, "and I want her to be like a Parisian woman."

Next day and the following days, in fact, for twenty days after, Rodolphe spent all his time at the Bergmanns', watching Francesca without having determined to watch her. In some souls admiration is not independent of a certain penetration. The young Frenchman discerned in Francesca the imprudence of girlhood, the true nature of a woman as yet unbroken, sometimes struggling against her love, and at other moments yielding and carried away by it. The old man certainly behaved to her as a father to his daughter, and Francesca treated him with a deeply felt gratitude which roused her instinctive nobleness. The situation and the woman were to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, of which the solution attracted him more and more.

These last days were full of secret joys, alternating with melancholy moods, with tiffs and quarrels even more delightful than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca were of one mind. And he was more and more fascinated by this tenderness apart from wit, always and in all things the same, an affection that was jealous of mere nothings—already!

"You care very much for luxury?" said he one evening

to Francesca, who was expressing her wish to get away from Gersau, where she missed many things.

"I!" cried she. "I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Rafael, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the Bay of Naples. Emilio," she went on, "have I ever complained here during our days of privation?"

"You would not have been yourself if you had," replied the old man gravely.

"After all, is it not in the nature of plain folk to aspire to grandeur?" she asked, with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and at her husband. "Were my feet made for fatigue?" she added, putting out two pretty little feet. "My hands"—and she held one out to Rodolphe—"were those hands made to work?—Leave us," she said to her husband; "I want to speak to him."

The old man went into the drawing-room with sublime good faith; he was sure of his wife.

"I will not have you come with us to Geneva," she said to Rodolphe. "It is a gossiping town. Though I am far above the nonsense the world talks, I do not choose to be calumniated, not for my own sake, but for his. I make it my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are leaving; stay here a few days. When you come on to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our great and unchangeable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you; you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you—you shall never discern in my conduct anything whatever that may arouse your jealousy."

She drew him into a corner of the balcony, kissed him on the forehead, and fled, leaving him in amazement.

Next day Rodolphe heard that the lodgers at the Bergmanns' had left at daybreak. It then seemed to him intolerable to remain at Gersau, and he set out for Vevay by the longest route, starting sooner than was necessary. Attracted to the waters of the lake where the beautiful Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva by the end of October. To avoid

the discomforts of the town he took rooms in a house at Eaux-Vives, outside the walls. As soon as he was settled, his first care was to ask his landlord, a retired jeweler, whether some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to reside at Geneva.

"Not so far as I know," replied the man. "Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken Monsieur Jeanrenaud's place for three years; it is one of the finest on the lake. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and that of Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu, let to the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. Prince Colonna has come to see his daughter and his son-in-law Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan, or if you like, a Sicilian, an old adherent of King Murat's, and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. Serious steps had to be taken, and the Pope's interest in the Colonna family was invoked, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for the Prince and Princess Gandolphini to live here. Geneva is anxious to do nothing to displease the Holy Alliance to which it owes its independence. *Our* part is not to ruffle foreign courts: there are many foreigners here, Russians and English."

"Even some Genevese."

"Yes, Monsieur, our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years at the Villa Diodati, which every one goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney."

"You cannot tell me whether within a week or so a bookseller from Milan has come with his wife—named Lamporani, one of the leaders of the last revolution?"

"I could easily find out by going to the Foreigners' Club," said the jeweller.

Rodolphe's first walk was very naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, whose recent death added to its attractiveness: for is not death the consecration of genius?

The road to Eaux-Vives follows the shore of the lake, and, like all the roads in Switzerland, is very narrow; in

some spots, in consequence of the configuration of the hilly ground, there is scarcely space for two carriages to pass each other.

At a few yards from the Jeanrenauds' house, which he was approaching without knowing it, Rodolphe heard the sound of a carriage behind him, and, finding himself in a sunk road, he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road free. Of course he looked at the approaching carriage—an elegant English phaeton, with a splendid pair of English horses. He felt quite dizzy as he beheld in this carriage Francesca, beautifully dressed, by the side of an old lady as hard as a cameo. A servant blazing with gold lace stood behind. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled at seeing him like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which the lover followed with his eyes as he climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a country house, toward which he ran.

"Who lives here?" he asked of the gardener.

"Prince and Princess Colonna, and Prince and Princess Gandolphini."

"Have they not just driven in?"

"Yes, sir."

In that instant a veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes; he saw clearly the meaning of the past.

"If only this is her last piece of trickery!" thought the thunder-struck lover to himself.

He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a whim, for he had heard what a *capriccio* might mean in an Italian. But what a crime had he committed in the eyes of a woman—in accepting a born princess as a citizen's wife! in believing that a daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the Middle Ages was the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his blunders increased Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be ignored and repelled. He asked for Prince Gandolphini, sending in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came forward to meet him, welcomed him with the best possible grace, and took him to walk on a terrace whence there was

a view of Geneva, the Jura, the hills covered with villas, and below them a wide expanse of the lake.

"My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see," he remarked, after pointing out the details to his visitor. "We have a sort of concert this evening," he added, as they returned to the splendid Villa Jeanrenaud. "I hope you will do me and the Princess the pleasure of seeing you. Two months of poverty endured in intimacy are equal to years of friendship."

Though he was consumed by curiosity, Rodolphe dared not ask to see the Princess; he slowly made his way back to Eaux-Vives, looking forward to the evening. In a few hours his passion, great as it had already been, was augmented by his anxiety and by suspense as to future events. He now understood the necessity for making himself famous, that he might some day find himself, socially speaking, on a level with his idol. In his eyes Francesca was made really great by the simplicity and ease of her conduct at Gersau. Princess Colonna's haughtiness, so evidently natural to her, alarmed Rodolphe, who would find enemies in Francesca's father and mother—at least so he might expect; and the secrecy which Princess Gandolphini had so strictly enjoined on him now struck him as a wonderful proof of affection. By not choosing to compromise the future, had she not confessed that she loved him?

At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe could get into a carriage and say with an emotion that is very intelligible, "To the Villa Jeanrenaud—to Prince Gandolphini's."

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The Princess was standing quite near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so thick and long, was bound with a golden fillet. Her face, in the light of wax candles, had the brilliant pallor peculiar to Italians, and which looks its best only by artificial light. She was in full evening dress, showing her fascinating shoulders, the figure of a girl and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, though there were some charming English and Russian ladies

present, the prettiest women of Geneva, and other Italians, among them the dazzling and illustrious Princess Varese, and the famous singer Tinti, who was at that moment singing.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-post, looked at the Princess, turning on her the fixed, tenacious, attracting gaze, charged with the full, insistent will which is concentrated in the feeling called desire, and thus assumes the nature of a vehement command. Did the flame of that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting each instant to see Rodolphe? In a few minutes she stole a glance at the door, as though magnetized by this current of love, and her eyes, without reserve, looked deep into Rodolphe's. A slight thrill quivered through that superb face and beautiful body; the shock to her spirit reacted: Francesca blushed! Rodolphe felt a whole life in this exchange of looks, so swift that it can only be compared to a lightning flash. But to what could his happiness compare? He was loved. The lofty Princess, in the midst of her world, in this handsome villa, kept the pledge given by the disguised exile, the capricious beauty of Bergmanns' lodgings. The intoxication of such a moment enslaves a man for life! A faint smile, refined and subtle, candid and triumphant, curled Princess Gandolphini's lips, and at a moment when she did not feel herself observed she looked at Rodolphe with an expression which seemed to ask his pardon for having deceived him as to her rank.

When the song was ended, Rodolphe could make his way to the Prince, who graciously led him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremonial of a formal introduction to Princess and Prince Colonna, and to Francesca. When this was over, the Princess had to take part in the famous quartet, "Mi manca la voce," which was sung by her with Tinti, with the famous tenor Genovese, and with a well-known Italian Prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a Prince, would have made him one of the Princes of Art.

"Take that seat," said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. "*Oimè!* I think there is some mistake in my name; I have for the last minute been Princess Rodolphini."

It was said with an artless grace which revived, in this avowal hidden beneath a jest, the happy days at Gersau. Rodolphe revelled in the exquisite sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, while sitting so close to her that one cheek was almost touched by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, at such a moment, "Mi manca la voce" is being sung, and by the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand what it was that brought the tears to Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as perhaps in all else, there are certain circumstances, trivial in themselves, but the outcome of a thousand little previous incidents, of which the importance is immense, as an epitome of the past and as a link with the future. A hundred times already we have felt the preciousness of the one we love; but a trifle—the perfect touch of two souls united during a walk perhaps by a single word, by some unlooked-for proof of affection, will carry the feeling to its supremest pitch. In short, to express this truth by an image which has been pre-eminently successful from the earliest ages of the world, there are in a long chain points of attachment needed where the cohesion is stronger than in the intermediate loops of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, at this party, in the face of the world, was one of those intense moments which join the future to the past, and rivet a real attachment more deeply in the heart. It was perhaps of these incidental rivets that Bossuet spoke when he compared to them the rarity of happy moments in our lives—he who had such a living and secret experience of love.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love, comes that of seeing her admired by every one else. Rodolphe was enjoying both at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and though Rodolphe's was already full, he added

to it pearls of great price; smiles shed aside for him alone, stolen glances, tones in her singing which Francesca addressed to him alone, but which made Tinti pale with jealousy, they were so much applauded. All his strength of desire, the special expression of his soul, was thrown over the beautiful Roman, who became unchangeably the beginning and the end of all his thoughts and actions. Rodolphe loved as every woman may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, a tenacity, which made Francesca the very substance of his heart; he felt her mingling with his blood as purer blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul; she would henceforth underlie the least efforts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean lies beneath the waves. In short, Rodolphe's lightest aspiration was now a living hope.

At the end of a few days, Francesca understood this boundless love; but it was so natural, and so perfectly shared by her, that it did not surprise her. She was worthy of it.

"What is there that is strange?" said she to Rodolphe, as they walked on the garden terrace, when he had been betrayed into one of those outbursts of conceit which come so naturally to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings —"what is extraordinary in the fact of your loving a young and beautiful woman, artist enough to be able to earn her living like Tinti, and of giving you some of the pleasures of vanity? What lout but would then become an Amadis? This is not in question between you and me. What is needed is that we both love faithfully, persistently; at a distance from each other for years, with no satisfaction but that of knowing that we are loved."

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "will you not consider my fidelity as devoid of all merit when you see me absorbed in the efforts of devouring ambition? Do you imagine that I can wish to see you one day exchange the fine name of Gandolphini for that of a man who is a nobody? I want to become one of the most remarkable men of my country, to be rich,

great—that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna."

"I should be grieved to see you without such sentiments in your heart," she replied, with a bewitching smile. "But do not wear yourself out too soon in your ambitious labors. Remain young. They say that politics soon make a man old."

One of the rarest gifts in women is a certain gayety which does not detract from tenderness. This combination of deep feeling with the lightness of youth added an enchanting grace at this moment to Francesca's charms. This is the key to her character; she laughs and she is touched; she becomes enthusiastic, and returns to arch raillery with a readiness, a facility, which make her the charming and exquisite creature she is, and for which her reputation is known outside Italy. Under the graces of a woman she conceals vast learning, thanks to the excessively monotonous, and almost monastic life she led in the castle of the old Colonnas.

This rich heiress was at first intended for the cloister, being the fourth child of Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of her two brothers, and of her elder sister, suddenly brought her out of her retirement, and made her one of the most brilliant matches in the Papal States. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landowners in Sicily; and Francesca was married to him instead, so that nothing might be changed in the position of the family. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried.

From the age of nine till she was sixteen, Francesca, under the direction of a Cardinal of the family, had read all through the library of the Colonnas, to make weight against her ardent imagination by studying science, art, and letters. But in these studies she acquired the taste for independence and liberal ideas, which threw her, with her husband, into the ranks of the revolution. Rodolphe had not yet learned that, besides five living languages, Francesca knew Greek,

Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature perfectly understood that, for a woman, the first condition of being learned is to keep it deeply hidden.

Rodolphe spent the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When spring returned, notwithstanding the infinite delights of the society of a clever woman, wonderfully well informed, young and lovely, the lover went through cruel sufferings, endured indeed with courage, but which were sometimes legible in his countenance, and betrayed themselves in his manners or speech, perhaps because he believed that Francesca shared them. Now and again it annoyed him to admire her calmness. Like an Englishwoman, she seemed to pride herself on expressing nothing in her face; its serenity defied love; he longed to see her agitated; he accused her of having no feeling, for he believed in the tradition which ascribes to Italian women a feverish excitability.

"I am a Roman!" Francesca gravely replied one day when she took quite seriously some banter on this subject from Rodolphe.

There was a depth of tone in her reply which gave it the appearance of scathing irony, and which set Rodolphe's pulses throbbing. The month of May spread before them the treasures of her fresh verdure; the sun was sometimes as powerful as at midsummer. The two lovers happened to be at a part of the terrace where the rock rises abruptly from the lake, and were leaning over the stone parapet that crowns the wall above a flight of steps leading down to a landing-stage. From the neighboring villa, where there is a similar stairway, a boat presently shot out like a swan, its flag flaming, its crimson awning spread over a lovely woman comfortably reclining on red cushions, her hair wreathed with real flowers; the boatman was a young man dressed like a sailor, and rowing with all the more grace because he was under the lady's eye.

"They are happy!" exclaimed Rodolphe, with bitter emphasis. "Claire de Bourgogne, the last survivor of the

only house which could ever vie with the royal family of France—"

"Oh! of a bastard branch, and that a female line."

"At any rate, she is Vicomtesse de Beauséant; and she did not—"

"Did not hesitate, you would say, to bury herself here with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil, you would say," replied the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a Frenchwoman; I am an Italian, my dear sir!"

Francesca turned away from the parapet, leaving Rodolphe, and went to the further end of the terrace, whence there is a wide prospect of the lake. Watching her as she slowly walked away, Rodolphe suspected that he had wounded her soul, at once so simple and so wise, so proud and so humble. It turned him cold; he followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her to herself. But he did not heed the warning, and detected her wiping away her tears. Tears! in so strong a nature.

"Francesca," said he, taking her hand, "is there a single regret in your heart?"

She was silent, disengaged her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, and again dried her eyes.

"Forgive me!" he said. And with a rush, he kissed her eyes to wipe away the tears.

Francesca did not seem aware of his passionate impulse, she was so violently agitated. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he put his arm round her, clasped her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she freed herself by a dignified movement of offended modesty, and, standing a yard off, she looked at him without anger, but with firm determination. "Go this evening," she said. "We meet no more till we meet at Naples."

The order was stern, but it was obeyed, for it was Francesca's will.

On his return to Paris, Rodolphe found in his rooms a portrait of Princess Gandolphini painted by Schinner, as

Schinner can paint. The artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the Prince, anxious as he was for a portrait of his wife, would be able to conquer the great painter's objections; but Francesca, no doubt, had bewitched him, and obtained from him—which was almost a miracle—an original portrait for Rodolphe, and a duplicate for Emilio. She told him this in a charming and delightful letter, in which the mind indemnified itself for the reserve required by the worship of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, never to cease, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only indulgence they allowed themselves.

Rodolphe, possessed by an ambition sanctified by his love, set to work. First he longed to make his fortune, and risked his all in an undertaking to which he devoted all his faculties as well as his capital; but he, an inexperienced youth, had to contend against duplicity, which won the day. Thus three years were lost in a vast enterprise, three years of struggling and courage.

The Villèle ministry fell just when Rodolphe was ruined. The valiant lover thought he would seek in politics what commercial industry had refused him; but before braving the storms of this career, he went, all wounded and sick at heart, to have his bruises healed and his courage revived at Naples, where the Prince and Princess had been reinstated in their place and rights on the King's accession. This, in the midst of his warfare, was a respite full of delights; he spent three months at the Villa Gandolphini, rocked in hope.

Rodolphe then began again to construct his fortune. His talents were already known; he was about to attain the desires of his ambition; a high position was promised him as the reward of his zeal, his devotion, and his past services, when the storm of July, 1830, broke, and again his bark was swamped.

She, and God! These are the only witnesses of the brave efforts, the daring attempts of a young man gifted with fine

qualities, but to whom, so far, the protection of luck—the god of fools—has been denied. And this indefatigable wrestler, upheld by love, comes back to fresh struggles, lighted on his way by an always friendly eye, an ever faithful heart.

Lovers! Pray for him!

As she finished the narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville's cheeks were on fire; there was a fever in her blood. She was crying—but with rage. This little novel, inspired by the literary style then in fashion, was the first reading of the kind that Rosalie had ever had the chance of devouring. Love was depicted in it, if not by a master-hand, at any rate by a man who seemed to give his own impressions; and truth, even if unskilled, could not fail to touch a virgin soul. Here lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible agitation, of her fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna.

She never for an instant doubted the sincerity of this poetical flight; Albert had taken pleasure in telling the story of his passion, while changing the names of persons and perhaps of places. Rosalie was possessed by infernal curiosity. What woman but would, like her, have wanted to know her rival's name—for she too loved! As she read these pages, to her really contagious, she had said solemnly to herself, "I love him!"—She loved Albert, and felt in her heart a gnawing desire to fight for him, to snatch him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music, and that she was not beautiful.

"He will never love me!" thought she.

This conclusion aggravated her anxiety to know whether she might not be mistaken, whether Albert really loved an Italian Princess, and was loved by her. In the course of this fateful night, the power of swift decision, which had characterized the famous Watteville, was fully developed in his descendant. She devised those whimsical schemes,

round which hovers the imagination of most young girls when, in the solitude to which some injudicious mothers confine them, they are aroused by some tremendous event which the system of repression to which they are subjected could neither foresee nor prevent. She dreamed of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into the garden of the house occupied by Albert; of taking advantage of the lawyer's being asleep to look through the window into his private room. She thought of writing to him, or of bursting the fetters of Besançon society by introducing Albert to the drawing-room of the Hotel de Rupt. This enterprise, which to the Abbé de Grancey even would have seemed the climax of the impossible, was a mere passing thought.

"Ah!" said she to herself, "my father has a dispute pending as to his land at les Rouxey. I will go there! If there is no lawsuit, I will manage to make one, and *he* shall come into our drawing-room!" she cried, as she sprang out of bed and to the window to look at the fascinating gleam which shone through Albert's nights. The clock struck one; he was still asleep.

"I shall see him when he gets up; perhaps he will come to his window."

At this instant Mademoiselle de Watteville was witness to an incident which promised to place in her power the means of knowing Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the kiosk to help Jérome, Albert's servant, to get across the coping of the wall and step into the little building. In Jérome's accomplice Rosalie at once recognized Mariette the lady's-maid.

"Mariette and Jérome!" said she to herself. "Mariette, such an ugly girl! Certainly they must be ashamed of themselves."

Though Mariette was horribly ugly and six-and-thirty, she had inherited several plots of land. She had been seventeen years with Madame de Watteville, who valued her highly for her bigotry, her honesty, and long service, and

she had no doubt saved money and invested her wages and perquisites. Hence, earning about ten louis a year, she probably had by this time, including compound interest and her little inheritance, not less than ten thousand francs.

In Jérome's eyes ten thousand francs could alter the laws of optics; he saw in Mariette a neat figure; he did not perceive the pits and seams which virulent smallpox had left on her flat, parched face; to him the crooked mouth was straight; and ever since Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him so near to the Wattevilles' house, he had laid siege systematically to the maid, who was as prim and sanctimonious as her mistress, and who, like every ugly old maid, was far more exacting than the handsomest.

If the night-scene in the kiosk is thus fully accounted for to all perspicacious readers, it was not so to Rosalie, though she derived from it the most dangerous lesson that can be given, that of a bad example. A mother brings her daughter up strictly, keeps her under her wing for seventeen years, and then, in one hour, a servant-girl destroys the long and painful work, sometimes by a word, often indeed by a gesture! Rosalie got into bed again, not without considering how she might take advantage of her discovery.

Next morning, as she went to Mass accompanied by Mariette—her mother was not well—Rosalie took the maid's arm, which surprised the country wench not a little.

"Mariette," said she, "is Jérome in his master's confidence?"

"I do not know, Mademoiselle."

"Do not play the innocent with me," said Mademoiselle de Watteville dryly. "You let him kiss you last night under the kiosk; I no longer wonder that you so warmly approved of my mother's ideas for the improvement she planned."

Rosalie could feel how Mariette was trembling by the shaking of her arm.

"I wish you no ill," Rosalie went on. "Be quite easy;

I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can meet Jérome as often as you please."

"But, Mademoiselle," replied Mariette, "it is perfectly respectable; Jérome honestly means to marry me—"

"But then," said Rosalie, "why meet at night?"

Mariette was dumfounded, and could make no reply.

"Listen, Mariette; I am in love too! In secret and without any return. I am, after all, my father's and mother's only child. You have more to hope for from me than from any one else in the world—"

"Certainly, Mademoiselle, and you may count on us for life or death," exclaimed Mariette, rejoiced at the unexpected turn of affairs.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I will not marry Monsieur de Soulas; but one thing I will have, and must have; my help and favor are yours on one condition only."

"What is that?"

"I must see the letters which Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jérome."

"But what for?" said Mariette in alarm.

"Oh! merely to read them, and you yourself shall post them afterward. It will cause a little delay; that is all."

At this moment they went into church, and each of them, instead of reading the order of Mass, fell into her own train of thought.

"Dear, dear, how many sins are there in all that?" thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, brain, and heart were completely upset by reading the story, by this time regarded it as history, written for her rival. By dint of thinking of nothing else, like a child, she ended by believing that the "Eastern Review" was no doubt forwarded to Albert's lady-love.

"Oh!" said she to herself, her head buried in her hands in the attitude of a person lost in prayer—"Oh! how can I get my father to look through the list of people to whom the 'Review' is sent?"

After breakfast she took a turn in the garden with her father, coaxing and cajoling him, and brought him to the kiosk.

"Do you suppose, my dear little papa, that our 'Review' is ever read abroad?"

"It is but just started—"

"Well, I will wager that it is."

"It is hardly possible."

"Just go and find out, and note the names of any subscribers out of France."

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter:

"I was right; there is not one foreign subscriber as yet. They hope to get some at Neufchâtel, at Berne, and at Geneva. One copy is, in fact, sent to Italy, but it is not paid for—to a Milanese lady at her country house at Belgirate, on Lago Maggiore."

"What is her name?"

"The Duchesse d'Argaiolo."

"Do you know her, papa?"

"I have heard about her. She was by birth a Princess Soderini, a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy."

Two days after, Mariette placed the following letter in Mademoiselle de Watteville's hands:

Albert Savaron to Léopold Hannequin

"Yes, 'tis so, my dear friend; I am at Besançon, while you thought I was travelling. I would not tell you anything till success should begin, and now it is dawning. Yes, my dear Léopold, after so many abortive undertakings, over which I have shed the best of my blood, have wasted so many efforts, spent so much courage, I have made up my mind to do as you have done—to start on a beaten

path, on the highroad, as the longest but the safest. I can see you jump with surprise in your lawyer's chair!

"But do not suppose that anything is changed in my personal life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, and that under the reservations *she* insists on. I did not tell you, my friend; but I was horribly weary of Paris. The outcome of the first enterprise, on which I had founded all my hopes, and which came to a bad end in consequence of the utter rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and fleece me—me, though everything was done by my energy—made me give up the pursuit of a fortune after the loss of three years of my life. One of these years was spent in the law courts, and perhaps I should have come worse out of the scrape if I had not been made to study law when I was twenty.

"I made up my mind to go into politics solely, to the end that I may some day find my name in a list for promotion to the Senate under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and so revive in France a good name now extinct in Belgium—though indeed I am neither legitimate nor legitimized."

"Ah! I knew it! He is of noble birth!" exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

"You know how conscientiously I studied, how faithful and useful I was as an obscure journalist, and how excellent a secretary to the statesman who, on his part, was true to me in 1829. Flung to the depths once more by the revolution of July just when my name was becoming known, at the very moment when, a Master of Appeals, I was about to find my place as a necessary wheel in the political machine, I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the fallen, and fighting for them, without them. Oh! why was I but three-and-thirty, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible? I concealed from you all my devotedness and my dangers. What would you have? I was full of faith. We should not have agreed.

"Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay and contented, writing my political articles, I was in despair; I foresaw my fate, at the age of thirty-seven, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the smallest fame, just having failed in a noble undertaking, the founding, namely, of a daily paper, answering only to a need of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment. I did not know which way to turn, and I felt my own value! I wandered about, gloomy and hurt, through the lonely places of Paris—Paris which had slipped through my fingers—thinking of my crushed ambitions, but never giving them up. Oh, what frantic letters I wrote at that time to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes I would say to myself, 'Why did I sketch so vast a programme of life? Why demand everything? Why not wait for happiness while devoting myself to some mechanical employment.'

"I then looked about me for some modest appointment by which I might live. I was about to get the editorship of a paper under a manager who did not know much about it, a man of wealth and ambition, when I took fright. 'Would *she* ever accept as her husband a man who had stooped so low?' I wondered.

"This reflection made me two-and-twenty again. But, oh, my dear Léopold, how the soul is worn by these perplexities! What must not caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions!—They suffer what Napoleon suffered, not at Saint Helena, but on the Quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly while he could have quelled the insurrection; as he actually did, on the same spot, a little later, in Vendémiaire. Well, my life has been a torment of that kind, extending over four years. How many a speech to the Chamber have I not delivered in the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne! These wasted harangues have at any rate sharpened my tongue and accustomed my mind to formulate its ideas in words. And while I was undergoing this

secret torture, you were getting married, you had paid for your business, you were made law clerk to the Maire of your district, after gaining the cross for a wound at Saint-Merri.

"Now, listen. When I was a small boy and tortured cockchafers, the poor insects had one form of struggle which used almost to put me in a fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly but without getting away, though they could spread their wings. We used to say, 'They are marking time.' Now, was this sympathy? Was it a vision of my own future?—Oh! to spread my wings and yet be unable to fly! That has been my predicament since that fine undertaking by which I was disgusted, but which has now made four families rich.

"At last, seven months ago, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris Bar, seeing how many vacancies had been left by the promotion of several lawyers to eminent positions. But when I remembered the rivalry I had seen among men of the press, and how difficult it is to achieve anything of any kind in Paris, the arena where so many champions meet, I came to a determination painful to myself, but certain in its results, and perhaps quicker than any other. In the course of our conversations you had given me a picture of the society of Besançon, of the impossibility for a stranger to get on there, to produce the smallest effect, to get into society, or to succeed in any way whatever. It was there that I determined to set up my flag, thinking, and rightly, that I should meet with no opposition, but find myself alone to canvass for the election. The people of the Comté will not meet the outsider? The outsider will not meet them! They refuse to admit him to their drawing-rooms, he will never go there! He never shows himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class that elects the deputies—the commercial class. I am going especially to study commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will gain their lawsuits, I will effect compromises, I will be the greatest pleader in Besançon.

By and by I will start a 'Review,' in which I will defend the interests of the country, will create them, or preserve them, or resuscitate them. When I shall have won a sufficient number of votes, my name will come out of the urn. For a long time the unknown barrister will be treated with contempt, but some circumstance will arise to bring him to the front—some unpaid defence, or a case which no other pleader will undertake.

"Well, my dear Léopold, I packed up my books in eleven cases, I bought such law-books as might prove useful, and I sent everything off, furniture and all, by carrier to Besançon. I collected my diplomas, and I went to bid you good-by. The mail coach dropped me at Besançon, where, in three days' time, I chose a little set of rooms looking out over some gardens. I sumptuously arranged the mysterious private room where I spend my nights and days, and where the portrait of my divinity reigns—of her to whom my life is dedicate, who fills it wholly, who is the mainspring of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talents. Then, as soon as the furniture and books had come, I engaged an intelligent manservant, and there I sat for five months like a hibernating marmot.

"My name had, however, been entered on the list of lawyers in the town. At last I was called one day to defend an unhappy wretch at the Assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak for once! One of the most influential merchants of Besançon was on the jury; he had a difficult task to fulfil; I did my utmost for the man, and my success was absolute and complete. My client was innocent; I very dramatically secured the arrest of the real criminals, who had come forward as witnesses. In short, the Court and the public were united in their admiration. I managed to save the examining magistrate's pride by pointing out the impossibility of detecting a plot so skilfully planned.

"Then I had to fight a case for my merchant, and won his suit. The Cathedral Chapter next chose me to defend a tremendous action against the town, which had been

going on for four years; I won that. Thus, after three trials, I had become the most famous advocate of Franche-Comté.

"But I bury my life in the deepest mystery, and so hide my aims. I have adopted habits which prevent my accepting any invitations. I am only to be consulted between six and eight in the morning; I go to bed after my dinner, and work at night. The Vicar-General, a man of parts, and very influential, who placed the Chapter's case in my hands after they had lost it in the lower Court, of course professed their gratitude. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I will win your suit, but I want no fee; I want more' (start of alarm on the Abbé's part). 'You must know that I am a great loser by putting myself forward in antagonism to the town. I came here only to leave the place as deputy. I mean to engage only in commercial cases, because commercial men return the members; they will distrust me if I defend "the priests" —for to them you are simply the priests. If I undertake your defence, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a Minister' (again a start of surprise on the part of my Abbé), 'and Master of Appeals, under the name of Albert de Savarus' (another start). 'I have remained faithful to monarchical opinions; but, as you have not the majority of votes in Besançon, I must gain votes among the citizens. So the fee I ask of you is the votes you may be able secretly to secure for me at the opportune moment. Let us each keep our own counsel, and I will defend, for nothing, every case to which a priest of this diocese may be a party. Not a word about my previous life, and we will be true to each other.'

"When he came to thank me afterward, he gave me a note for five hundred francs, and said in my ear, 'The votes are a bargain all the same.'—I have in the course of five interviews made a friend, I think, of this Vicar-General.

"Now I am overwhelmed with business, and I undertake no cases but those brought me by merchants, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. This line of conduct attaches business men to me, and allows me to make friends

with influential persons. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house to purchase in Besançon, so as to secure a qualification. I count on your loaning me the necessary capital for this investment. If I should die, if I should fail, the loss would be too small to be any consideration between you and me. You will get the interest out of the rental, and I shall take good care to look out for something cheap, so that you may lose nothing by this mortgage, which is indispensable.

"Oh! my dear Léopold, no gambler with the last remains of his fortune in his pocket, bent on staking it at the Cercle des Etrangers for the last time one night, when he must come away rich or ruined, ever felt such a perpetual ringing in his ears, such a nervous moisture on his palms, such a fevered tumult in his brain, such inward qualms in his body as I go through every day now that I am playing my last card in the game of ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, for nearly ten years now have I been struggling. This battle with men and things, in which I have unceasingly poured out my strength and energy, and so constantly worn the springs of desire, has, so to speak, undermined my vitality. With all the appearance of a strong man of good health, I feel myself a wreck. Every day carries with it a shred of my inmost life. At every fresh effort I feel that I should never be able to begin again. I have no power, no vigor left but for happiness; and if it should never come to crown my head with roses, the *me* that is really me would cease to exist, I should be a ruined thing. I should wish for nothing more in the world. I should want to cease from living. You know that power and fame, the vast moral empire that I crave, is but secondary; it is to me only a means to happiness, the pedestal for my idol.

"To reach the goal and die, like the runner of antiquity! To see fortune and death stand on the threshold hand in hand! To win the beloved woman just when love is extinct! To lose the faculty of enjoyment after earning the right to be happy!—Of how many men has this been the fate!

"But there surely is a moment when Tantalus rebels, crosses his arms, and defies hell, throwing up his part of the eternal dupe. That is what I shall come to if anything should thwart my plan; if, after stooping to the dust of provincial life, prowling like a starving tiger round these tradesmen, these electors, to secure their votes; if, after wrangling in these squalid cases, and giving them my time—the time I might have spent on Lago Maggiore, seeing the waters she sees, basking in her gaze, hearing her voice—if, after all, I failed to scale the tribune and conquer the glory that should surround the name that is to succeed to that of Argaiolo! Nay, more than this, Léopold; there are days when I feel a heavy languor; deep disgust surges up from the depths of my soul, especially when, abandoned to long day-dreams, I have lost myself in anticipation of the joys of blissful love! May it not be that our desire has only a certain modicum of power, and that it perishes, perhaps, of a too lavish effusion of its essence? For, after all, at this present, my life is fair, illuminated by faith, work, and love.

"Farewell, my friend; I send love to your children, and beg you to remember me to your excellent wife.—Yours,

"ALBERT."

Rosalie read this letter twice through, and its general purport was stamped on her heart. She suddenly saw the whole of Albert's previous existence, for her quick intelligence threw light on all the details, and enabled her to take it all in. By adding this information to the little novel published in the "Review," she now fully understood Albert. Of course, she exaggerated the greatness, remarkable as it was, of this lofty soul and potent will, and her love for Albert thenceforth became a passion, its violence enhanced by all the strength of her youth, the weariness of her solitude, and the unspent energy of her character. Love is in a young girl the effect of a natural law; but when her craving for affection is centred in an exceptional man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in a youthful heart.

Thus Mademoiselle de Watteville had in a few days reached a morbid and very dangerous stage of enamored infatuation. The Baroness was much pleased with her daughter, who, being under the spell of her absorbing thoughts, never resisted her will, seemed to be devoted to feminine occupations, and realized her mother's ideal of a docile daughter.

The lawyer was now engaged in Court two or three times a week. Though he was overwhelmed with business, he found time to attend the trials, call on the litigious merchants, and conduct the "Review"; keeping up his personal mystery, from the conviction that the more covert and hidden was his influence, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, reading up the list of the electors of Besançon, and finding out their interests, their characters, their various friendships and antipathies. Did ever a Cardinal hoping to be made Pope give himself more trouble?

One evening Mariette, on coming to dress Rosalie for an evening party, handed to her, not without many groans over this treachery, a letter of which the address made Mademoiselle de Watteville shiver and redden and turn pale again as she read the address:

To Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo
(née *Princesse Soderini*),
At Belgirate,
Lago Maggiore, *Italy.*

In her eyes this direction blazed as the words *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, did in the eyes of Belshazzar. After concealing the letter, Rosalie went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's; and as long as the endless evening lasted, she was tormented by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold; she had several times asked herself whether, if he knew of her crime, infamous inasmuch as it necessarily goes unpunished, the high-minded Albert

could esteem her. Her conscience answered an uncompromising "No."

She had expiated her sin by self-imposed penances; she fasted, she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, her arms outstretched for hours, and repeating prayers all the time. She had compelled Mariette to similar acts of repentance; her passion was mingled with genuine asceticism, and was all the more dangerous.

"Shall I read that letter, shall I not?" she asked herself, while listening to the Chavoncourt girls. One was sixteen, the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon her two friends as mere children because they were not secretly in love.—"If I read it," she finally decided, after hesitating for an hour between Yes and No, "it shall, at any rate, be the last. Since I have gone so far as to see what he wrote to his friend, why should I not know what he says to *her?* If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert! am I not your wife?"

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the Duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

"*25th*

"My dear Soul, all is well. To my other conquests I have just added an invaluable one: I have done a service to one of the most influential men who work the elections. Like the critics, who make other men's reputations but can never make their own, he makes deputies though he never can become one. The worthy man wanted to show his gratitude without loosening his purse-strings by saying to me, 'Would you care to sit in the Chamber? I can get you returned as deputy.'

"'If I ever made up my mind to enter on a political career,' replied I hypocritically, 'it would be to devote myself to the Comté, which I love, and where I am appreciated.'

"'Well,' he said, 'we will persuade you, and through you we shall have weight in the Chamber, for you will distinguish yourself there.'

"And so, my beloved angel, say what you will, my perseverance will be rewarded. Ere long I shall, from the high place of the French Tribune, come before my country, before Europe. My name will be flung to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

"Yes, as you tell me, I was old when I came to Besançon, and Besançon has aged me more; but, like Sixtus V., I shall be young again the day after my election. I shall enter on my true life, my own sphere. Shall we not then stand in the same line? Count Savaron de Savarus, Ambassador I know not where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, the widow of the Duc d'Argaiolo! Triumph restores the youth of men who have been preserved by incessant struggles. Oh, my Life! with what gladness did I fly from my library to my private room, to tell your portrait of this progress before writing to you! Yes, the votes I can command, those of the Vicar-General, of the persons I can oblige, and of this client, make my election already sure.

"*26th.*

"We have entered on the twelfth year since that blest evening when, by a look, the beautiful Duchess sealed the promises made by the exile Francesca. You, dear, are thirty-two, I am thirty-five; the dear Duke is seventy-seven —that is to say, ten years more than yours and mine put together, and he still keeps well! My patience is almost as great as my love, and indeed I need a few years yet to rise to the level of your name. As you see, I am in good spirits to-day, I can laugh; that is the effect of hope. Sadness or gladness, it all comes to me through you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that on which I saw you for the first time, when my life became one with yours as the earth turns to the light. *Qual pianto* are these eleven years, for this is the 26th of December, the anniversary of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Geneva. For eleven years have I been crying to you, while you shine like a star set too high for man to reach it.

"*27th.*

"No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I do not like that odious Milanese fashion of chatting at the Scala every evening with a dozen persons, among whom it is hard if no one says something sweet. To me solitude is like the lump of amber in whose heart an insect lives forever in unchanging beauty. Thus the heart and soul of a woman remain pure and unaltered in the form of their first youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

"*28th.*

"Is your statue never to be finished? I should wish to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every possible form, to beguile my impatience. I still am waiting for the view of Belgirate from the south, and that of the balcony; these are all that I now lack. I am so extremely busy that to-day I can only write you nothing—but that nothing is everything. Was it not of nothing that God made the world? That nothing is a word, God's word: I love you!

"*30th*

"Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality.—So you found great pleasure in seeing all the details of our first acquaintance thus set down? Alas! even while disguising them I was sorely afraid of offending you. We had no stories, and a 'Review' without stories is a beauty without hair. Not being inventive by nature, and in sheer despair, I took the only poetry in my soul, the only adventure in my memory, and pitched it in the key in which it would bear telling; nor did I ever cease to think of you while writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I cannot say from my pen. Did not the transformation of your fierce Sormano into Gina make you laugh?

"You ask after my health. Well, it is better than in Paris. Though I work enormously, the peacefulness of the surroundings has its effect on the mind. What really tries

and ages me, dear angel, is the anguish of mortified vanity, the perpetual friction of Paris life, the struggle of rival ambitions. This peace is a balm.

"If you could imagine the pleasure your letter gives me! —the long, kind letter in which you tell me the most trivial incidents of your life. No! you women can never know to what a degree a true lover is interested in these trifles. It was an immense pleasure to see the pattern of your new dress. Can it be a matter of indifference to me to know what you wear? If your lofty brow is knit? If our writers amuse you? If Canalis' songs delight you? I read the books you read. Even to your boating on the lake every incident touched me. Your letter is as lovely, as sweet as your soul! Oh! flower of heaven, perpetually adored, could I have lived without those dear letters, which for eleven years have upheld me in my difficult path like a light, like a perfume, like a steady chant, like some divine nourishment, like everything which can soothe and comfort life.

"Do not fail me! If you knew what anxiety I suffer the day before they are due, or the pain a day's delay can give me! Is she ill? Is *he?* I am midway between hell and paradise.

"*O mia cara diva*, keep up your music, exercise your voice, practice. I am enchanted with the coincidence of employments and hours by which, though separated by the Alps, we live by precisely the same rule. The thought charms me and gives me courage. The first time I undertook to plead here—I forgot to tell you this—I fancied that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the flash of inspiration which lifts the poet above mankind. If I am returned to the Chamber—oh! you must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance there!

"*30th, Evening.*

"Good heavens, how I love you! Alas! I have intrusted too much to my love and my hopes. An accident which should sink that overloaded bark would end my life!

For three years now I have not seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so wildly that I am forced to stop.—To see you, to hear that girlish caressing voice! To embrace in my gaze that ivory skin, glistening under the candlelight, and through which I can read your noble mind! To admire your fingers playing on the keys, to drink in your whole soul in a look, in the tone of an *Oimè* or an *Alberto!* To walk by the blossoming orange-trees, to live a few months in the bosom of that glorious scenery!—That is life. What folly it is to run after power, a name, fortune! But at Belgirate there is everything; there is poetry, there is glory! I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as that dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, live there as *cavaliere servente*, only our passion was too fierce to allow of it.

"Farewell, my angel, forgive me my next fit of sadness in consideration of this cheerful mood; it has come as a beam of light from the torch of Hope, which has hitherto seemed to me a Will o' the wisp."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter, which seemed heavy in her hand. "After eleven years, to write like this!"

"Mariette," said Mademoiselle de Watteville to her maid next morning, "go and post this letter. Tell Jérôme that I know all I wished to know, and that he is to serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess our sins, you and I, without saying to whom the letters belonged, nor to whom they were going. I was in the wrong; I alone am guilty."

"Mademoiselle has been crying?" said Mariette.

"Yes, but I do not want that my mother should perceive it; give me some very cold water."

In the midst of the storms of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of conscience. Touched by the beautiful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, telling herself that there was nothing left to her but to be resigned, and to respect the happiness of two be-

ings worthy of each other, submissive to fate, looking to God for everything, without allowing themselves any criminal acts or wishes. She felt a better woman, and had a certain sense of satisfaction after coming to this resolution, inspired by the natural rectitude of youth. And she was confirmed in it by a girl's idea: She was sacrificing herself for *him*.

"She does not know how to love," thought she. "Ah! if it were I—I would give up everything to a man who loved me so.—To be loved!—When, by whom shall I be loved? That little Monsieur de Soulas only loves my money; if I were poor, he would not even look at me."

"Rosalie, my child, what are you thinking about? You are working beyond the outline," said the Baroness to her daughter, who was making worsted-work slippers for the Baron.

Rosalie spent the winter of 1834–35 torn by secret tumults; but in the spring, in the month of April, when she reached the age of nineteen, she sometimes thought that it would be a fine thing to triumph over a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude the prospect of this struggle had fanned her passion and her evil thoughts. She encouraged her romantic daring by making plan after plan. Although such characters are an exception, there are, unfortunately, too many Rosalies in the world, and this story contains a moral which ought to serve them as a warning.

In the course of this winter Albert de Savarus had quietly made considerable progress in Besançon. Confident of success, he now impatiently awaited the dissolution of the Chamber. Among the men of the moderate party he had won the suffrages of one of the makers of Besançon, a rich contractor, who had very wide influence.

Wherever they settled the Romans took immense pains, and spent enormous sums to have an unlimited supply of good water in every town of their empire. At Besançon they drank the water from Arcier, a hill at some consider-

able distance from Besançon. The town stands in a horse-shoe circumscribed by the river Doubs. Thus, to restore an aqueduct in order to drink the same water that the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurdities which only succeed in a country place where the most exemplary gravity prevails. If this whim could be brought home to the hearts of the citizens, it would lead to considerable outlay, and this expenditure would benefit the influential contractor.

Albert Savaron de Savarus opined that the water of the river was good for nothing but to flow under a suspension bridge, and that the only drinkable water was that from Arcier. Articles were printed in the "Review" which merely expressed the views of the commercial interest of Besançon. The nobility and the citizens, the moderates and the legitimists, the government party and the opposition, everybody, in short, was agreed that they must drink the same water as the Romans, and boast of a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besançon. At Besançon—as in the matter of the two railways to Versailles—as for every standing abuse—there were private interests unconfessed which gave vital force to this idea. The reasonable folk in opposition to this scheme, who were indeed but few, were regarded as old women. No one talked of anything but of Savaron's two projects. And thus, after eighteen months of underground labor, the ambitious lawyer had succeeded in stirring to its depths the most stagnant town in France, the most unyielding to foreign influence, in finding the length of its foot, to use a vulgar phrase, and exerting a preponderant influence without stirring from his own room. He had solved the singular problem of how to be powerful without being popular.

In the course of this winter he won seven lawsuits for various priests of Besançon. At moments he could breathe freely at the thought of his coming triumph. This intense desire, which made him work so many interests and

devise so many springs, absorbed the last strength of his terribly overstrung soul. His disinterestedness was lauded and he took his clients' fees without comment. But this disinterestedness was, in truth, moral usury; he counted on a reward far greater to him than all the gold in the world.

In the month of October, 1834, he had bought, ostensibly to serve a merchant who was in difficulties, with money loaned him by Léopold Hannequin, a house which gave him a qualification for election. He had not seemed to seek or desire this advantageous bargain.

"You are really a remarkable man," said the Abbé de Grancey, who, of course, had watched and understood the lawyer. The Vicar-General had come to introduce to him a Canon who needed his professional advice. "You are a priest who has taken the wrong turning." This observation struck Savarus.

Rosalie, on her part, had made up her mind, in her strong girl's head, to get Monsieur de Savarus into the drawing-room and acquainted with the society of the Hôtel de Rupt. So far she had limited her desires to seeing and hearing Albert. She had compounded, so to speak, and a composition is often no more than a truce.

Les Rouxey, the inherited estate of the Watteville, was worth just ten thousand francs a year; but in other hands it would have yielded a great deal more. The Baron in his indifference—for his wife was to have, and in fact had, forty thousand francs a year—left the management of les Rouxey to a sort of factotum, an old servant of the Wattevilles named Modinier. Nevertheless, whenever the Baron and his wife wished to go out of the town, they went to les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The château and the park were, in fact, created by the famous Watteville, who in his active old age was passionately attached to this magnificent spot.

Between two precipitous hills—little peaks with bare summits known as the great and the little Rouxey—in the heart of a ravine where the torrents from the heights, with

the Dent de Vilard at their head, come tumbling to join the lovely upper waters of the Doubs, Watteville had a huge dam constructed, leaving two cuttings for the overflow. Above this dam he made a beautiful lake, and below it two cascades; and these, uniting a few yards below the falls, formed a lovely little river to irrigate the barren, uncultivated valley, hitherto devastated by the torrent. This lake, this valley, and these two hills he inclosed in a ring fence, and built himself a retreat on the dam, which he widened to two acres by accumulating above it all the soil which had to be removed to make a channel for the river and the irrigation canals.

When the Baron de Watteville thus obtained the lake above his dam he was owner of the two hills, but not of the upper valley thus flooded, through which there had been at all times a right-of-way to where it ends in a horseshoe under the Dent de Vilard. But this ferocious old man was so widely dreaded that so long as he lived no claim was urged by the inhabitants of Riceys, the little village on the further side of the Dent de Vilard. When the Baron died, he left the slopes of the two Rouxey hills joined by a strong wall, to protect from inundation the two lateral valleys opening into the valley of Rouxey, to the right and left at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. Thus he died the master of the Dent de Vilard.

His heirs asserted their protectorate of the village of Riceys, and so maintained the usurpation. The old assassin, the old renegade, the old Abbé Watteville, ended his career by planting trees and making a fine road over the shoulder of one of the Rouxey hills to join the highroad. The estate belonging to this park and house was extensive, but badly cultivated; there were chalets on both hills and neglected forests of timber. It was all wild and deserted, left to the care of nature, abandoned to chance growths, but full of sublime and unexpected beauty. You may now imagine les Rouxey.

It is unnecessary to complicate this story by relating all

the prodigious trouble and the inventiveness stamped with genius by which Rosalie achieved her end without allowing it to be suspected. It is enough to say that it was in obedience to her mother that she left Besançon in the month of May, 1835, in an antique travelling carriage drawn by a pair of sturdy hired horses, and accompanied her father to les Rouxey.

To a young girl love lurks in everything. When she rose, the morning after her arrival, Mademoiselle de Watteville saw from her bedroom window the fine expanse of water, from which the light mists rose like smoke, and were caught in the firs and larches, rolling up and along the hills till they reached the heights, and she gave a cry of admiration.

"They loved by the lakes! *She* lives by a lake! A lake is certainly full of love!" she thought.

A lake fed by snows has opalescent colors and a translucency that make it one huge diamond; but when it is shut in, like that of les Rouxey, between two granite masses covered with pines, when silence broods over it like that of the Savannas or the Steppes, then every one must exclaim as Rosalie did.

"We owe that," said her father, "to the notorious Watteville."

"On my word," said the girl, "he did his best to earn forgiveness. Let us go in a boat to the further end; it will give us an appetite for breakfast."

The Baron called two gardener lads who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister Modinier. The lake was about six acres in breadth, in some places ten or twelve, and four hundred in length. Rosalie soon found herself at the upper end shut in by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of that little Switzerland.

"Here we are, Monsieur le Baron," said Modinier, signing to the gardeners to tie up the boat; "will you come and look?"

"Look at what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh, nothing!" exclaimed the Baron. "But you are a sensible girl; we have some little secrets between us, and I may tell you what ruffles my mind. Some difficulties have arisen since 1830 between the village authorities of Riceys and me, on account of this very Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle the matter without your mother's knowing anything about it, for she is stubborn; she is capable of flinging fire and flames broadcast, particularly if she should hear that the Mayor of Riceys, a republican, got up this action as a sop to his people."

Rosalie had presence of mind enough to disguise her delight, so as to work more effectually on her father.

"What action?" said she.

"Mademoiselle, the people of Riceys," said Modinier, "have long enjoyed the right of grazing and cutting fodder on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonnit, the Maire since 1830, declares that the whole Dent belongs to his district, and maintains that a hundred years ago, or more, there was a way through our grounds. You understand that in that case we should no longer have them to ourselves. Then this barbarian would end by saying, what the old men in the village say, that the ground occupied by the lake was appropriated by the Abbé de Watteville. That would be the end of les Rouxey; what next?"

"Indeed, my child, between ourselves, it is the truth," said Monsieur de Watteville simply. "The land is a usurpation, with no title-deed but lapse of time. And, therefore, to avoid all worry, I should wish to come to a friendly understanding as to my border line on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and I will then raise a wall."

"If you give way to the municipality, it will swallow you up. You ought to have threatened Riceys."

"That is just what I told the master last evening," said Modinier. "But in confirmation of that view I proposed that he should come to see whether, on this side of the Dent or on the other, there may not be, high or low, some traces of an inclosure."

For a century the Dent de Vilard had been used by both parties without coming to extremities; it stood as a sort of party wall between the communes of Riceys and les Rouxey, yielding little profit. Indeed, the object in dispute, being covered with snow for six months in the year, was of a nature to cool their ardor. Thus it required all the hot blast by which the revolution of 1830 inflamed the advocates of the people, to stir up this matter, by which Monsieur Chantonnit, the Maire of Riceys, hoped to give a dramatic turn to his career on the peaceful frontier of Switzerland, and to immortalize his term of office. Chantonnit, as his name shows, was a native of Neufchâtel.

"My dear father," said Rosalie, as they got into the boat again, "I agree with Modinier. If you wish to secure the joint possession of the Dent de Vilard, you must act with decision, and get a legal opinion which will protect you against this enterprising Chantonnit. Why should you be afraid? Get the famous lawyer Savaron—engage him at once, lest Chantonnit should place the interests of the village in his hands. The man who won the case for the Chapter against the town can certainly win that of Watteville *versus* Riceys! Besides," she added, "les Rouxey will some day be mine—not for a long time yet, I trust.—Well, then, do not leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I like this place; I shall often live here, and add to it as much as possible. On those banks," and she pointed to the feet of the two hills, "I shall cut flower-beds and make the loveliest English gardens.—Let us go to Besançon and bring back with us the Abbé de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron, and my mother, if she cares to come. You can then make up your mind; but in your place I should have done so already. Your name is Watteville, and you are afraid of a fight! If you should lose your case—well, I will never reproach you by a word!"

"Oh, if that is the way you take it," said the Baron, "I am quite ready; I will see the lawyer."

"Besides, a lawsuit is really great fun. It brings some

interest into life, with coming and going and raging over it. You will have a great deal to do before you can get hold of the judges.—We did not see the Abbé de Grancey for three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the very existence of the Chapter was involved," said Monsieur de Watteville; "and then the Archbishop's pride, his conscience, everything that makes up the life of the priesthood, was at stake. That Savaron does not know what he did for the Chapter! He saved it!"

"Listen to me," said his daughter in his ear, "if you secure Monsieur de Savaron, you will gain your suit, won't you? Well, then, let me advise you. You cannot get at Monsieur Savaron excepting through Monsieur de Grancey. Take my word for it, and let us together talk to the dear Abbé without my mother's presence at the interview, for I know a way of persuading him to bring the lawyer to us."

"It will be very difficult to avoid mentioning it to your mother!"

"The Abbé de Grancey will settle that afterward. But just make up your mind to promise your vote to Monsieur Savaron at the next election, and you will see!"

"Go to the election! take the oath?" cried the Baron de Watteville.

"What then!" said she.

"And what will your mother say?"

"She may even desire you to do it," replied Rosalie, knowing as she did from Albert's letter to Léopold how deeply the Vicar-General had pledged himself.

Four days after the Abbé de Grancey called very early one morning on Albert de Savarus, having announced his visit the day before. The old priest had come to win over the great lawyer to the house of the Wattevilles, a proceeding which shows how much tact and subtlety Rosalie must have employed in an underhand way.

"What can I do for you, Monsieur le Vicaire-Général?" asked Savarus.

The Abbé, who told his story with admirable frankness, was coldly heard by Albert.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "it is out of the question that I should defend the interests of the Wattevilles, and you shall understand why. My part in this town is to remain perfectly neutral. I will display no colors; I must remain a mystery till the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Wattevilles would mean nothing in Paris, but here!—Here, where everything is discussed, I should be supposed by every one to be an ally of your Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What! do you suppose that you can remain unknown on the day of the election, when the candidates must oppose each other? It must then become known that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have held the appointment of Master of Appeals, that you are a man of the Restoration!"

"On the day of the election," said Savarus, "I will be all I am expected to be; and I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings."

"If you have the support of Monsieur de Watteville and his party, you will get a hundred votes in a mass, and far more to be trusted than those on which you rely. It is always possible to produce division of interests; convictions are inseparable."

"The deuce is in it!" said Savarus. "I am attached to you, and I could do a great deal for you, Father! Perhaps we may compound with the Devil. Whatever Monsieur de Watteville's business may be, by engaging Girardet, and prompting him, it will be possible to drag the proceedings out till the elections are over. I will not undertake to plead till the day after I am returned."

"Do this one thing," said the Abbé. "Come to the Hôtel de Rupt: there is a young person of nineteen there who, one of these days, will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and you can seem to be paying your court to her—"

"Ah! the young lady I sometimes see in the kiosk?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie," replied the Abbé de Grancey. "You are ambitious. If she takes a fancy to you, you may be everything an ambitious man can wish—who knows? A Minister perhaps. A man can always be a Minister who adds a hundred thousand francs a year to your amazing talents."

"Monsieur l'Abbé, if Mademoiselle de Watteville had three times her fortune, and adored me into the bargain, it would be impossible that I should marry her—"

"You are married?" exclaimed the Abbé.

"Not in church nor before the Maire, but morally speaking," said Savarus.

"That is even worse when a man cares about it as you seem to care," replied the Abbé. "Everything that is not done can be undone. Do not stake your fortune and your prospects on a woman's liking, any more than a wise man counts on a dead man's shoes before starting on his way."

"Let us say no more about Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Albert gravely, "and agree as to the facts. At your desire—for I have a regard and respect for you—I will appear for Monsieur de Watteville, but after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct the case under my instructions. That is the utmost I can do."

"But there are questions involved which can only be settled after inspection of the localities," said the Vicar-General.

"Girardet can go," said Savarus. "I cannot allow myself, in the face of a town I know so well, to take any step which might compromise the supreme interests that lie beyond my election."

The Abbé left Savarus after giving him a keen look, in which he seemed to be laughing at the young athlete's uncompromising politics, while admiring his firmness.

"Ah! I would have dragged my father into a lawsuit —I would have done anything to get him here!" cried Rosalie to herself, standing in the kiosk and looking at the lawyer in his room, the day after Albert's interview with the

Abbé, who had reported the result to her father. "I would have committed any mortal sin, and you will not enter the Watteville's' drawing-room; I may not hear your fine voice! You make conditions when your help is required by the Wattevilles and the Rupts!—Well, God knows, I meant to be content with these small joys; with seeing you, hearing you speak, going with you to les Rouxey, that your presence might to me make the place sacred. That was all I asked. But now—now I mean to be your wife.—Yes, yes; look at *her* portrait, at *her* drawing-room, *her* bedroom, at the four sides of *her* villa, the points of view from *her* gardens. You expect her statue? I will make her marble herself toward you!—After all, the woman does not love. Art, science, books, singing, music, have absorbed half her senses and her intelligence. She is old, too; she is past thirty; my Albert will not be happy!"

"What is the matter that you stay here, Rosalie?" asked her mother, interrupting her reflections. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the drawing-room, and he observed your attitude, which certainly betrays more thoughtfulness than is due at your age."

"Then, is Monsieur de Soulas a foe to thought?" asked Rosalie.

"Then you were thinking?" said Madame de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"Why, no! you were not thinking. You were staring at that lawyer's window with an attention that is neither becoming nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas, of all men, ought never to have observed."

"Why?" said Rosalie.

"It is time," said the Baroness, "that you should know what our intentions are. Amédée likes you, and you will not be unhappy as Comtesse de Soulas."

Rosalie, as white as a lily, made no reply, so completely was she stupefied by contending feelings. And yet, in the presence of the man she had this instant begun to hate vehemently, she forced the kind of smile which a ballet-

dancer puts on for the public. Nay, she could even laugh; she had the strength to conceal her rage, which presently subsided, for she was determined to make use of this fat simpleton to further her designs.

"Monsieur Amédée," said she, at a moment when her mother was walking ahead of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people together, "were you not aware that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?"

"A Legitimist?"

"Until 1830 he was Master of Appeals to the Council of State, attached to the supreme Ministerial Council, and in favor with the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would be very good of you to say nothing against him, but it would be better still if you would attend the election this year, carry the day, and hinder that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besançon."

"What sudden interest have you in this Savaron?"

"Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus, the natural son of the Comte de Savarus—pray keep the secret of my indiscretion—if he is returned deputy, will be our advocate in the suit about les Rouxey. Les Rouxey, my father tells me, will be my property; I intend to live there. it is a lovely place! I should be broken-hearted at seeing that fine piece of the great de Watteville's work destroyed."

"The devil!" thought Amédée, as he left the house. "The heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks her."

Monsieur de Chavoncourt is a Royalist, of the famous 221. Hence, from the day after the revolution of July, he always preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oaths and resisting the present order of things, after the pattern of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the wit to divide in their opinions, and to trust to the force of inertia and to Providence. Monsieur de Chavoncourt was not wholly trusted by his own party, but seemed to the Moderates the best man to choose; they preferred the triumph of his half-hearted opinions to the ac-

clamation of a Republican who should combine the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots.

Monsieur de Chavoncourt, highly respected in Besançon, was the representative of an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, was not an offence to anybody, especially as he had a son and three daughters. With such a family, fifteen thousand francs a year are a mere nothing. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of the family is above bribery, it would be hard if the electors did not esteem him. Electors wax enthusiastic over a *beau-ideal* of parliamentary virtue, just as the audience in the pit do at the representation of the generous sentiments they so little practice.

Madame de Chavoncourt, at this time a woman of forty, was one of the beauties of Besançon. While the Chamber was sitting, she lived meagrely in one of their country places to recoup herself by economy for Monsieur de Chavoncourt's expenses in Paris. In the winter she received very creditably once a week, on Tuesdays, understanding her business as mistress of the house. Young Chavancourt, a youth of two-and-twenty, and another young gentleman, named Monsieur de Vauchelles, no richer than Amédée and his schoolfriend, were his intimate allies. They made excursions together to Granvelle, and sometimes went out shooting; they were so well known to be inseparable that they were invited to the country together.

Rosalie, who was intimate with the Chavoncourt girls, knew that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if Monsieur de Soulas should repeat her words, it would be to his two companions. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his matrimonial plans, as Amédée had his; he wished to marry Victoire, the eldest of the Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt was to settle an estate worth seven thousand francs a year, and a hundred thousand francs in hard cash, when the contract should be signed. Victoire was this aunt's god-daughter and favorite niece. Consequently, young Chavoncourt and his friend

Vauchelles would be sure to warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the danger he was in from Albert's candidature.

But this did not satisfy Rosalie. She sent the Préfet of the department a letter written with her left hand, signed "*A friend to Louis Philippe*" in which she informed him of the secret intentions of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, pointing out the serious support a Royalist orator might give to Berryer, and revealing to him the deeply artful course pursued by the lawyer during his two years' residence at Besançon. The Préfet was a capable man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, devoted by conviction to the Government of July—in short, one of those men of whom, in the Rue de Grenelle, the Minister of the Interior could say, "We have a capital Préfet at Besançon."—The Préfet read the letter, and, in obedience to its instructions, he burned it.

Rosalie aimed at preventing Albert's election, so as to keep him five years longer at Besançon.

At that time an election was a fight between parties, and in order to win, the Ministry chose its ground by choosing the moment when it would give battle. The elections were therefore not to take place for three months yet. When a man's whole life depends on an election, the period that elapses between the issuing of the writs for convening the electoral bodies, and the day fixed for their meetings, is an interval during which ordinary vitality is suspended. Rosalie fully understood how much latitude Albert's absorbed state would leave her during these three months. By promising Mariette—as she afterward confessed—to take both her and Jérôme into her service, she induced the maid to bring her all the letters Albert might send to Italy, and those addressed to him from that country. And all the time she was pondering these machinations, the extraordinary girl was working slippers for her father with the most innocent air in the world. She even made a greater display than ever of candor and simplicity, quite understanding how valuable that candor and innocence would be to her ends.

"My daughter grows quite charming!" said Madame de Watteville.

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher senior, composed of the contractor who expected to get the work for the aqueduct for the Arcier waters; of Monsieur Boucher's father-in law; of Monsieur Granet, the influential man to whom Savarus had done a service, and who was to nominate him as a candidate; of Girardet the lawyer; of the printer of the "Eastern Review"; and of the President of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the assembly consisted of twenty-seven persons in all, men who in the provinces are regarded as bigwigs. Each man represented on an average six votes, but in estimating their value they said ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their own influence. Among these twenty-seven was one who was wholly devoted to the Préfet, one false brother who secretly looked for some favor from the Ministry, either for himself or for some one belonging to him.

At this preliminary meeting, it was agreed that Savaron the lawyer should be named as candidate, a motion received with such enthusiasm as no one looked for from Besançon. Albert, waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to fetch him, was chatting with the Abbé de Grancey, who was interested in this absorbing ambition. Albert had appreciated the priest's vast political capacities; and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaties, had been willing to become his guide and adviser in this culminating struggle. The Chapter did not love Monsieur de Chavoncourt, for it was his wife's brother-in-law, as President of the Tribunal, who had lost the famous suit for them in the lower Court.

"You are betrayed, my dear fellow," said the shrewd and worthy Abbé, in that gentle, calm voice which old priests acquire.

"Betrayed!" cried the lover, struck to the heart.

"By whom I know not at all," the priest replied. "But at the Préfecture your plans are known, and your hand read

like a book. At this moment I have no advice to give you. Such affairs need consideration. As for this evening, take the bull by the horns, anticipate the blow. Tell them all your previous life, and thus you will mitigate the effect of the discovery on the good folk of Besançon."

"Oh, I was prepared for it," said Albert in a broken voice.

"You would not benefit by my advice; you had the opportunity of making an impression at the Hotel de Rupt; you do not know the advantage you would have gained—"

"What?"

"The unanimous support of the Royalists, an immediate readiness to go to the election—in short, above a hundred votes. Adding to these what, among ourselves, we call the ecclesiastical vote, though you were not yet nominated, you were master of the votes by ballot. Under such circumstances, a man may temporize, may make his way—"

Alfred Boucher when he came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the preliminary meeting, found the Vicar General and the lawyer cold, calm, and grave.

"Good-night, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Albert. "We will talk of your business at greater length when the elections are over."

And he took Alfred's arm, after pressing Monsieur de Grancey's hand with meaning. The priest looked at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the lofty expression which a general may have when he hears the first gun fired for a battle. He raised his eyes to heaven, and left the room, saying to himself, "What a priest he would make!"

Eloquence is not at the Bar. The pleader rarely puts forth the real powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Eloquence is, nowadays, rarely in the pulpit; but it is found on certain occasions in the Chamber of Deputies, when an ambitious man stakes all to win all, or, stung by a myriad darts, at a given moment bursts into speech. But it is still more certainly found in some privileged beings, at the inevitable hour when their claims must

either triumph or be wrecked, and when they are forced to speak. Thus at this meeting, Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of winning himself some supporters, displayed all the faculties of his soul and the resources of his intellect. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness, without cowardice, quite gravely, and was not dismayed at finding himself among twenty or thirty men. The news of the meeting and of its determination had already brought a few docile sheep to follow the bell.

Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was about to deluge him with a speech announcing the decision of the Boucher Committee, Albert begged for silence, and, as he shook hands with Monsieur Boucher, tried to warn him, by a sign, of an unexpected danger.

"My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just announced to me the honor you have done me. But before that decision is irrevocable," said the lawyer, "I think that I ought to explain to you who and what your candidate is, so as to leave you free to take back your word if my declarations should disturb your conscience!"

This exordium was followed by profound silence. Some of the men thought it showed a noble impulse.

Albert gave a sketch of his previous career, telling them his real name, his action under the Restoration, and revealing himself as a new man since his arrival at Besançon, while pledging himself for the future. This address held his hearers breathless, it was said. These men, all with different interests, were spellbound by the brilliant eloquence that flowed at boiling heat from the heart and soul of this ambitious spirit. Admiration silenced reflection. Only one thing was clear—the thing which Albert wished to get into their heads—

Was it not far better for the town to have one of those men who are born to govern society at large than a mere voting-machine? A statesman carries power with him. A commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, is but a con-

science. What a glory for Provence to have found a Mirabeau, to return the only statesman since 1830 that the revolution of July had produced!

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the audience believed it great enough to become a splendid political instrument in the hands of their representative. They all saw in Albert Savaron, Savarus the great Minister. And, reading the secret calculations of his constituents, the clever candidate gave them to understand that they would be the first to enjoy the right of profiting by his influence.

This confession of faith, this ambitious programme, this retrospect of his life and character was, according to the only man present who was capable of judging of Savarus (he has since become one of the leading men of Besançon), a masterpiece of skill and of feeling, of fervor, interest, and fascination. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never had any man had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a weapon only for close warfare, has only an immediate effect. Reflection kills the word when the word ceases to overpower reflection. If the votes had then been taken, Albert's name would undoubtedly have come out of the ballot-box. At the moment, he was conqueror. But he must conquer every day for two months.

Albert went home quivering. The townfolk had applauded him, and he had achieved the great point of silencing beforehand the malignant talk to which his early career might give rise. The commercial interest of Besançon had nominated the lawyer, Albert Savaron de Savarus, as its candidate.

Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, at first infectious, presently became blundering.

The Préfet, alarmed by this success, set to work to count the Ministerial votes, and contrived to have a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, so as to effect a coalition in their common interests. Every day, without Albert's being able to discover how, the voters in the Boucher committee diminished in number.

Nothing could resist the slow grinding of the Préfecture. Three or four clever men would say to Albert's clients, "Will the deputy defend you and win your lawsuits? Will he give you advice, draw up your contracts, arrange your compromises?—He will be your slave for five years longer, if, instead of returning him to the Chamber, you only hold out the hope of his going there five years hence."

This calculation did Savarus all the more mischief, because the wives of some of the merchants had already made it. The parties interested in the matter of the bridge and that of the water from Arcier could not hold out against a talking-to from a clever Ministerialist, who proved to them that their safety lay at the Préfecture, and not in the hands of an ambitious man. Each day was a check for Savarus, though each day the battle was led by him and fought by his lieutenants—a battle of words, speeches, and proceedings. He dared not go to the Vicar-General, and the Vicar-General never showed himself. Albert rose and went to bed in a fever, his brain on fire.

At last the day dawned of the first struggle, practically the show of hands; the votes are counted, the candidates estimate their chances, and clever men can prophesy their failure or success. It is a decent hustings, without the mob, but formidable; agitation, though it is not allowed any physical display, as it is in England, is not the less profound. The English fight these battles with their fists, the French with hard words. Our neighbors have a scrimmage, the French try their fate by cold combinations calmly worked out. This particular political business is carried out in opposition to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party named their candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt came forward; then Albert appeared, and was accused by the Chavoncourt committee and the Radicals of being an uncompromising man of the Right, a second Berryer. The Ministry had their candidate, a stalking-horse, useful only to receive the purely Ministerial votes. The votes, thus divided, gave no result. The Republican candi-

date had twenty, the Ministry got fifty, Albert had seventy, Monsieur de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the Préfet's party had perfidiously made thirty of its most devoted adherents vote for Albert, so as to deceive the enemy. The votes for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, added to the eighty votes—the real number—at the disposal of the Préfecture would carry the election, if only the Préfet could succeed in gaining over a few of the Radicals. A hundred and sixty votes were not recorded: those of Monsieur de Grancey's following and the Legitimists.

The show of hands at an election, like a dress rehearsal at a theatre, is the most deceptive thing in the world. Albert Savarus came home, putting a brave face on the matter, but half dead. He had had the wit, the genius, or the good luck to gain, within the last fortnight, two stanch supporters —Girardet's father-in-law and a very shrewd old merchant to whom Monsieur de Grancey had sent him. These two worthy men, his self-appointed spies, affected to be Albert's most ardent opponents in the hostile camp. Toward the end of the show of hands they informed Savarus, through the medium of Monsieur Boucher, that thirty voters, unknown, were working against him in his party, playing the same trick that they were playing for his benefit on the other side.

A criminal marching to execution could not suffer as Albert suffered as he went home from the hall where his fate was at stake. The despairing lover could endure no companionship. He walked through the streets alone, between eleven o'clock and midnight. At one in the morning, Albert, to whom sleep had been unknown for the past three days, was sitting in his library in a deep armchair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands hanging limp, in a forlorn attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears hung on his long lashes, tears that dim the eyes, but do not fall; fierce thought drinks them up, the fire of the soul consumes them. Alone, he might weep. And then, under the kiosk, he saw a white figure, which reminded him of Francesca.

"And for three months I have had no letter from her!

What has become of her? I have not written for two months, but I warned her. Is she ill? Oh, my love! My life! Will you ever know what I have gone through? What a wretched constitution is mine! Have I an aneurism?" he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulses seemed audible in the silence like little grains of sand dropping on a big drum.

At this moment three distinct taps sounded on his door; Albert hastened to open it, and almost fainted with joy at seeing the Vicar-General's cheerful and triumphant mien. Without a word, he threw his arms round the Abbé de Grancey, held him fast, and clasped him closely, letting his head fall on the old man's shoulder. He was a child again; he cried as he had cried on hearing that Francesca Soderini was a married woman. He betrayed his weakness to no one but to this priest, on whose face shone the light of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as shrewd as he was sublime.

"Forgive me, dear Abbé, but you come at one of those moments when the man vanishes, for you are not to think me vulgarly ambitious."

"Oh! I know," replied the Abbé. "You wrote '*Ambition for love's sake!*'—Ah! my son, it was love in despair that made me a priest in 1786, at the age of two-and-twenty. In 1788 I was in charge of a parish. I know life.—I have refused three bishoprics already; I mean to die at Besançon."

"Come and see her!" cried Savarus, seizing a candle, and leading the Abbé into the handsome room where hung the portrait of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

"She is one of those women who are born to reign!" said the Vicar-General, understanding how great an affection Albert showed him by this mark of confidence. "But there is pride on that brow; it is implacable; she would never forgive an insult! It is the Archangel Michael, the angel of execution, the inexorable angel—'All or nothing' is the motto of this type of angel. There is something divinely pitiless in that head."

"You have guessed well," cried Savarus. "But, my

dear Abbé, for more than twelve years now she has reigned over my life, and I have not a thought for which to blame myself—"

"Ah! if you could only say the same of God!" said the priest with simplicity. "Now, to talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a real politician, this time you will follow my advice. You would not be where you are now if you would have gone to the Wattevilles when I first told you. But you must go there to-morrow; I will take you in the evening. The Rouxey estates are in danger; the case must be defended within three days. The election will not be over in three days. They will take good care not to appoint examiners the first day. There will be several voting days, and you will be elected by ballot—"

"How can that be?" asked Savarus.

"By winning the Rouxey lawsuit you will gain eighty Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty I can command, and you have a hundred and ten. Then, as twenty remain to you of the Boucher committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all."

"Well," said Albert, "we must get seventy-five more."

"Yes," said the priest, "since all the rest are Ministerial. But, my son, you have two hundred votes, and the Préfecture no more than a hundred and eighty."

"I have two hundred votes?" said Albert, standing stupid with amazement, after starting to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

"You have those of Monsieur de Chavoncourt," said the Abbé.

"How?" said Albert.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," the priest repeated coldly.

"But you see—she is inexorable," said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," said the Abbé calmly for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The Vicar-General would not be implicated in the scheme which at last smiled on the despairing politician. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity and honor.

"To-morrow evening at the Hotel de Rupt you will meet Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You can thank her beforehand for what she is going to do for you, and tell her that your gratitude is unbounded, that you are hers body and soul, that henceforth your future is that of her family. You are quite disinterested, for you have so much confidence in yourself that you regard the nomination as deputy as a sufficient fortune.

"You will have a struggle with Madame de Chavoncourt; she will want you to pledge your word. All your future life, my son, lies in that evening. But, understand clearly, I have nothing to do with it. I am answerable only for the Legitimist voters; I have secured Madame de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will both vote for you, have won over the young men; Madame de Watteville will get the old ones. As to my electors, they are infallible."

"And who on earth has gained over Madame de Chavoncourt?" asked Savarus.

"Ask me no questions," replied the Abbé. "Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, is not capable of increasing his wealth. Though Vauchelles marries the eldest without anything from her father, because her old aunt is to settle something on her, what is to become of the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and your ambition is as good as a gold mine. Some one has told Madame de Chavoncourt that she will do better by getting her daughter married than by sending her husband to waste his money in Paris. That some one manages Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt manages her husband."

"That is enough, my dear Abbé. I understand. When

once I am returned as deputy, I have somebody's fortune to make, and by making it large enough I shall be released from my promise. In me you have a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. Great Heavens! what have I done to deserve so true a friend?"

"You won a triumph for the Chapter," said the Vicar-General, smiling. "Now, as to all this, be as secret as the tomb. We are nothing, we have done nothing. If we were known to have meddled in election matters, we should be eaten up alive by the Puritans of the Left—who do worse—and blamed by some of our own party, who want everything. Madame de Chavoncourt has no suspicion of my share in all this. I have confided in no one but Madame de Watteville, whom we may trust as we trust ourselves."

"I will bring the Duchess to you to be blessed!" cried Savarus.

After seeing out the old priest, Albert went to bed in the swaddling clothes of power.

Next evening, as may well be supposed, by nine o'clock Madame la Baronne de Watteville's rooms were crowded by the aristocracy of Besançon in convocation extraordinary. They were discussing the exceptional step of going to the poll, to oblige the daughter of the de Rupts. It was known that the former Master of Appeals, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers under the Elder Branch, was to be presented that evening. Madame de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, exquisitely dressed, while her elder sister, secure of her lover, had not indulged in any of the arts of the toilet. In country towns these little things are remarked. The Abbé de Grancey's fine and clever head was to be seen moving from group to group, listening to everything, seeming to be apart from it all, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up a question and direct the issue.

"If the Elder Branch were to return," said he to an old statesman of seventy, "what politicians would they find?"

—"Berryer, alone on his bench, does not know which way to turn; if he had sixty votes, he would often scotch the wheels of the Government and upset Ministries!"—"The Duc de Fitz-James is to be nominated at Toulouse."—"You will enable Monsieur de Watteville to win his lawsuit."—"If you vote for Monsieur Savarus, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the Moderates!" etc., etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was disposed to regard such delay as an impertinence.

"My dear Baroness," said Madame de Chavoncourt, "do not let such serious issues turn on such a trifle. The varnish on his boots is not dry—or a consultation, perhaps, detains Monsieur de Savarus."

Rosalie shot a side glance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

"She is very lenient to Monsieur de Savarus," she whispered to her mother.

"You see," said the Baroness with a smile, "there is a question of a marriage between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus."

Mademoiselle de Watteville hastily went to a window looking out over the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savarus had not yet appeared. The storm that threatened now burst. Some of the gentlemen sat down to cards, finding the thing intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and exclaimed aloud in his amazement, "He must be dead!"

The Vicar-General stepped out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. In Albert's rooms all was dark; not a light was to be seen.

"Jérôme!" cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the yard below. The Abbé looked at her with astonishment. "Where in the world is your master?" she asked the man, who came to the foot of the wall.

"Gone—in a post-chaise, Mademoiselle."

"He is ruined!" exclaimed the Abbé de Grancey, "or he is happy!"

The joy of triumph was not so effectually concealed on Rosalie's face that the Vicar-General could not detect it. He affected to see nothing.

"What can this girl have had to do with this business?" he asked himself.

They all three returned to the drawing-room, where Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange, the extraordinary, the prodigious news of the lawyer's departure, without any reason assigned for his evasion. By half-past eleven only fifteen persons remained, among them Madame de Chavoncourt and the Abbé de Godenars, another Vicar-General, a man of about forty, who hoped for a bishopric, the two Chavoncourt girls, and Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédée de Soulas, and a retired magistrate, one of the most influential members of the upper circle of Besançon, who had been very eager for Albert's election. The Abbé de Grancey sat down by the Baroness in such a position as to watch Rosalie, whose face, usually pale, wore a feverish flush.

"What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

At this moment a servant in livery brought in a letter for the Abbé de Grancey on a silver tray.

"Pray read it," said the Baroness.

The Vicar-General read the letter; he saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her kerchief.

"She recognizes the writing," said he to himself, after glancing at the girl over his spectacles. He folded up the letter, and calmly put it in his pocket without a word. In three minutes he had met three looks from Rosalie which were enough to make him guess everything.

"She is in love with Albert Savarus!" thought the Vicar-General.

He rose and took leave. He was going toward the door when, in the next room, he was overtaken by Rosalie, who said:

"Monsieur de Grancey, it was from Albert!"

"How do you know that it was his writing, to recognize it from so far?"

The girl's reply, caught as she was in the toils of her impatience and rage, seemed to the Abbé sublime.

"I love him!—What is the matter?" she said after a pause.

"He gives up the election."

Rosalie put her finger to her lip.

"I ask you to be as secret as if it were a confession," said she before returning to the drawing-room. "If there is an end of the election, there is an end of the marriage with Sidonie."

In the morning, on her way to Mass, Mademoiselle de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which had prompted Albert's disappearance at the most criticial moment of his life.

"Mademoiselle, an old gentleman from Paris arrived yesterday morning at the Hotel National; he came in his own carriage with four horses, and a courier in front, and a servant. Indeed, Jérome, who saw the carriage returning, declares he could only be a prince or a *milord.*"

"Was there a coronet on the carriage?" asked Rosalie.

"I do not know," said Mariette. "Just as two was striking he came to call on Monsieur Savarus, and sent in his card; and when he saw it, Jérome says Monsieur turned as pale as a sheet, and said he was to be shown in. As he himself locked the door, it is impossible to tell what the old gentleman and the lawyer said to each other; but they were together above an hour, and then the old gentleman, with the lawyer, called up his servant. Jérome saw the servant go out again with an immense package, four feet long, which looked like a great painting on canvas. The old gentleman had in his hand a large parcel of papers. Monsieur Savaron was paler than death, and he, so proud, so dignified, was in a state to be pitied. But he treated the old gentleman so respectfully that he could not have been

politer to the King himself. Jérome and Monsieur Albert Savaron escorted the gentleman to his carriage, which was standing with the horses in. The courier started on the stroke of three.

"Monsieur Savaron went straight to the Préfecture, and from that to Monsieur Gentillet, who sold him the old travelling carriage that used to belong to Madame de Saint-Vier before she died; then he ordered post-horses for six o'clock. He went home to pack; no doubt he wrote a lot of letters; finally, he settled everything with Monsieur Girardet, who went to him and stayed till seven. Jérome carried a note to Monsieur Boucher, with whom his master was to have dined; and then, at half-past seven, the lawyer set out, leaving Jérome with three months' wages, and telling him to find another place.

"He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, whom he took home, and at his house, Jérome says, he took a plate of soup, for at half-past seven Monsieur Girardet had not yet dined. When Monsieur Savaron got into the carriage again he looked like death. Jérome, who, of course, saw his master off, heard him tell the postilion 'The Geneva Road!' "

"Did Jérome ask the name of the stranger at the Hotel National?"

"As the old gentleman did not mean to stay, he was not asked for it. The servant by his orders no doubt pretended not to speak French."

"And the letter which came so late to the Abbé de Grancey?" said Rosalie.

"It was Monsieur Girardet, no doubt, who ought to have delivered it; but Jérome says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who was much attached to lawyer Savaron, was as much upset as he was. So he who came so mysteriously, as Mademoiselle Galard says, is gone away just as mysteriously."

After hearing this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville fell into a brooding and absent mood, which everybody could see. It is useless to say anything of the commotion that arose in Besançon on the disappearance of Monsieur Sava-

ron. It was understood that the Préfet had obliged him with the greatest readiness by giving him at once a passport across the frontier, for he was thus quit of his only opponent. Next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was carried to the top by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

"Jack is gone by the way he came," said an elector on hearing of Albert Savaron's flight.

This event lent weight to the prevailing prejudice at Besançon against strangers; indeed, two years previously they had received confirmation from the affair of the Republican newspaper. Ten days later Albert de Savarus was never spoken of again. Only three persons—Girardet the attorney, the Vicar-General, and Rosalie—were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the Vicar-General; but Rosalie, better informed than either of them, had known for three months past that the Duc d'Argaiolo was dead.

In the month of April, 1836, no one had had any news from or of Albert de Savarus. Jérome and Mariette were to be married, but the Baroness confidentially desired her maid to wait till her daughter was married, saying that the two weddings might take place at the same time.

"It is time that Rosalie should be married," said the Baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville. "She is nineteen, and she is fearfully altered in these last months."

"I do not know what ails her," said the Baron.

"When fathers do not know what ails their daughters, mothers can guess," said the Baroness; "we must get her married."

"I am quite willing," said the Baron. "I shall give her les Rouxey now that the Court has settled our quarrel with the authorities of Riceys by fixing the boundary line at three hundred feet up the side of the Dent de Vilard. I am having a trench made to collect all the water and carry it into the lake. The village did not appeal, so the decision is final."

"It has never yet occurred to you," said Madame de Watteville, "that this decision cost me thirty thousand francs handed over to Chantonnit. That peasant would take nothing else; he sold us peace.—If you give away les Rouxey, you will have nothing left," said the Baroness.

"I do not need much," said the Baron; "I am breaking up."

"You eat like an ogre!"

"Just so. But however much I may eat, I feel my legs get weaker and weaker—"

"It is from working the lathe," said his wife.

"I do not know," said he.

"We will marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you give her les Rouxey, keep the life interest. I will give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the funds. Our children can live here; I do not see that they are much to be pitied."

"No. I shall give them less Rouxey out and out. Rosalie is fond of les Rouxey."

"You are a queer man with your daughter! It does not occur to you to ask me if I am fond of les Rouxey."

Rosalie, at once sent for, was informed that she was to marry Monsieur de Soulas one day early in the month of May.

"I am very much obliged to you, mother, and to you too, father, for having thought of settling me; but I do not mean to marry; I am very happy with you."

"Mere speeches!" said the Baroness. "You are not in love with Monsieur de Soulas, that is all."

"If you insist on the plain truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas—"

"Oh! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!" retorted her mother, with a bitter smile.

"The *never* of Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Rosalie with firm decision. "My father, I imagine, has no intention of making me marry against my wishes?"

"No, indeed no!" said the poor Baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"Very well!" said the Baroness, sternly controlling the rage of a bigot startled at finding herself unexpectedly defied, "you yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, may take the responsibility of settling your daughter. Consider well, Mademoiselle, for if you do not marry to my mind you will get nothing out of me!"

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and her husband, who took his daughter's part, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the summer at les Rouxey; life at the Hotel de Rupt was unendurable. It thus became known in Besançon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused the Comte de Soulas.

After their marriage Mariette and Jérome came to les Rouxey to succeed to Modinier in due time. The Baron restored and repaired the house to suit his daughter's taste. When she heard that these improvements had cost about sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building a conservatory, the Baroness understood that there was a leaven of spite in her daughter. The Baron purchased various outlying plots, and a little estate worth thirty thousand francs. Madame de Watteville was told that, away from her, Rosalie showed masterly qualities, that she was taking steps to improve the value of les Rouxey, that she had treated herself to a riding habit and rode about; her father, whom she made very happy, who no longer complained of his health, and who was growing fat, accompanied her in her expeditions. As the Baroness's name-day drew near—her name was Louise—the Vicar-General came one day to les Rouxey, deputed, no doubt, by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas, to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

"That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders," said the folk of Besançon.

After handsomely paying up the ninety thousand francs spent on les Rouxey, the Baroness allowed her husband a thousand francs a month to live on; she would not put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly

willing to return to Besançon for the 15th of August, and to remain there till the end of the month.

When, after dinner, the Vicar-General took Mademoiselle de Watteville apart, to open the question of the marriage, by explaining to her that it was vain to think any more of Albert, of whom they had had no news for a year past, he was stopped at once by a sign from Rosalie. The strange girl took Monsieur de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, whence there was a view of the lake.

"Listen, dear Abbé," said she. "To you whom I love as much as my father, for you had an affection for my Albert, I must at last confess that I committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband.—Here, read this."

She held out to him a number of the "Gazette" which she had in her apron pocket, pointing out the following paragraph under the date of Florence, May 25th:

"The wedding of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, the former Ambassador, to Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, *née* Princess Soderini, was solemnized with great splendor. Numerous entertainments given in honor of the marriage are making Florence gay. The Duchess's fortune is one of the finest in Italy, for the late Duke left her everything."

"The woman he loved is married," said she. "I divided them."

"You? How?" asked the Abbé.

Rosalie was about to reply, when she was interrupted by a loud cry from two of the gardeners, following on the sound of a body falling into the water; she started, and ran off screaming, "Oh! father!"—The Baron had disappeared.

In trying to reach a piece of granite on which he fancied he saw the impression of a shell, a circumstance which would have contradicted some system of geology, Monsieur de Watteville had gone down the slope, lost his balance, and slipped into the lake, which, of course, was deepest close under the roadway. The men had the greatest difficulty in

enabling the Baron to catch hold of a pole pushed down at the place where the water was bubbling, but at last they pulled him out, covered with mud, in which he had sunk; he was getting deeper and deeper in, by dint of struggling. Monsieur de Watteville had dined heavily, digestion was in progress, and was thus checked.

When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in such evident danger that two servants at once set out on horseback: one to ride to Besançon, and the other to fetch the nearest doctor and surgeon. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the first medical aid from Besançon, they found Monsieur de Watteville past all hope, in spite of the intelligent treatment of the Rouxey doctor. The fright had produced serous effusion on the brain, and the shock to the digestion was helping to kill the poor man.

This death, which would never have happened, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had stayed at Besançon, was ascribed by her to her daughter's obstinacy. She took an aversion for Rosalie, abandoning herself to grief and regrets that were evidently exaggerated. She spoke of the Baron as "her dear lamb!"

The last of the Wattevilles was buried on an island in the lake at les Rouxey, where the Baroness had a little Gothic monument erected of white marble, like that called the tomb of Héloïse at Père-Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe, the mother and daughter had settled in the Hotel de Rupt, where they lived in savage silence. Rosalie was suffering from real sorrow, which had no visible outlet; she accused herself of her father's death, and she feared another disaster, much greater in her eyes, and very certainly her own work; neither Girardet the attorney nor the Abbé de Grancey could obtain any information concerning Albert. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of repentance she felt that she must confess to the Vicar-General the horrible machinations by which she had separated Francesca and Albert. They had been simple, but formid-

able. Mademoiselle de Watteville had intercepted Albert's letters to the Duchess as well as that in which Francesca announced her husband's illness, warning her lover that she could write to him no more during the time while she was devoted, as was her duty, to the care of the dying man. Thus, while Albert was wholly occupied with election matters, the Duchess had written him only two letters; one in which she told him that the Duc d'Argaiolo was in danger, and one announcing her widowhood—two noble and beautiful letters, which Rosalie kept back.

After several nights' labor she succeeded in imitating Albert's writing very perfectly. She had substituted three letters of her own writing for three of Albert's, and the rough copies which she showed to the old priest made him shudder—the genius of evil was revealed in them to such perfection. Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, had prepared the Duchess for a change in the Frenchman's feelings, falsely representing him as faithless, and she had answered the news of the Duc d'Argaiolo's death by announcing the marriage ere long of Albert and Mademoiselle de Watteville. The two letters, intended to cross on the road, had, in fact, done so. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so much astonished the Vicar-General that he read them a second time. Francesca, stabbed to the heart by a girl who wanted to kill love in her rival, had answered the last in these four words: "You are free. Farewell."

"Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most atrocious and detestable," said the Abbé severely. "God often punishes them on earth; herein lies the reason of the terrible catastrophes which to us seem inexplicable. Of all secret crimes buried in the mystery of private life, the most disgraceful is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or of reading it surreptitiously. Every one, whoever it may be, and urged by whatever reason, who is guilty of such an act has stained his honor beyond retrieving.

"Do you not feel all that is touching, that is heavenly in the story of the youthful page, falsely accused, and carrying

the letter containing the order for his execution, who sets out without a thought of ill, and whom Providence protects and saves—miraculously, we say! But do you know wherein the miracle lies? Virtue has a glory as potent as that of innocent childhood.

"I say these things not meaning to admonish you," said the old priest, with deep grief. "I, alas! am not your spiritual director; you are not kneeling at the feet of God; I am your friend, appalled by dread of what your punishment may be. What has become of that unhappy Albert? Has he, perhaps, killed himself? There was tremendous passion under his assumption of calm. I understand now that old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, came here to take back his daughter's letters and portraits. This was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, and he went off, no doubt, to try to justify himself. But how is it that in fourteen months he has given us no news of himself?"

"Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy!"

"Happy?—He does not love you. Besides, you have no great fortune to give him. Your mother detests you; you made her a fierce reply which rankles, and which will be your ruin. When she told you yesterday that obedience was the only way to repair your errors, and reminded you of the need for marrying, mentioning Amédée—'If you are so fond of him, marry him yourself, mother!'—Did you, or did you not, fling these words in her teeth?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Well, I know her," Monsieur de Grancey went on. "In a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will be sure to have children; she will give Monsieur de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; she will benefit him in other ways, and reduce your share of her fortune as much as possible. You will be poor as long as she lives, and she is but eight-and-thirty! Your whole estate will be the land of les Rouxey, and the small share left to you after your father's legal debts are settled, if, indeed, your mother should consent to forego her claims on les Rouxey. From the point of view of ma-

terial advantages, you have done badly for yourself; from the point of view of feeling, I imagine you have wrecked your life. Instead of going to your mother—" Rosalie shook her head fiercely.

"To your mother," the priest went on, "and to religion, where you would, at the first impulse of your heart, have found enlightenment, counsel, and guidance, you chose to act in your own way, knowing nothing of life, and listening only to passion!"

These words of wisdom terrified Mademoiselle de Watteville.

"And what ought I to do now?" she asked after a pause.

"To repair your wrong-doing, you must ascertain its extent," said the Abbé.

"Well, I will write to the only man who can know anything of Albert's fate, Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, his friend from childhood."

"Write no more, unless to do honor to truth," said the Vicar-General. "Place the real and the false letters in my hands, confess everything in detail as though I were the keeper of your conscience, asking me how you may expiate your sins, and doing as I bid you. I shall see—for, above all things, restore this unfortunate man to his innocence in the eyes of the woman he had made his divinity on earth. Though he has lost his happiness, Albert must still hope for justification."

Rosalie promised to obey the Abbé, hoping that the steps he might take would perhaps end in bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after Mademoiselle de Watteville's confession a clerk came to Besançon from Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, armed with a power of attorney from Albert; he called first on Monsieur Girardet, begging his assistance in selling the house belonging to Monsieur Savaron. The attorney undertook to do this out of friendship for Albert. The clerk from Paris sold the furniture, and with the proceeds could repay some money owed by Savaron to Girardet, who on the occa-

sion of his inexplicable departure had loaned him five thousand francs while undertaking to collect his assets. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome and noble pleader, to whom he had been much attached, the clerk replied that no one knew but his master, and that the notary had seemed greatly distressed by the contents of the last letter he had received from Monsieur Albert de Savarus.

On hearing this, the Vicar-General wrote to Léopold. This was the worthy notary's reply:

"*To Monsieur l'Abbe de Grancey,*
Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

"PARIS.

"Alas, Monsieur, it is in nobody's power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has renounced it. He is a novice in the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse near Grenoble. You know, better than I who have but just learned it, that on the threshold of that cloister everything dies. Albert, foreseeing that I should go to him, placed the General of the Order between my utmost efforts and himself. I know his noble soul well enough to be sure that he is the victim of some odious plot unknown to us; but everything is at an end. The Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have carried severity to an extreme. At Belgirate, which she had left when Albert flew thither, she had left instructions leading him to believe that she was living in London. From London Albert went in search of her to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she was now engaged to the Duc de Rhétoré. When Albert succeeded in seeing Madame d'Argaiolo, at Florence, it was at the ceremony of her marriage.

"Our poor friend swooned in church, and even when he was in danger of death he could never obtain any explanation from this woman, who must have had I know not what in her heart. For seven months Albert had travelled in pursuit of a cruel creature who thought it sport to escape him; he knew not where or how to catch her.

"I saw him on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him, as I did, you would have felt that not a word might be spoken about the Duchess, at the risk of bringing on an attack which might have wrecked his reason. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found means to justify himself; but being falsely accused of being married! —what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead to the world. He longed for rest; let us hope that the deep silence and prayer into which he has thrown himself may give him happiness in another guise. You, Monsieur, who have known him, must greatly pity him; and pity his friends also.

"Yours," etc.

As soon as he received this letter, the good Vicar-General wrote to the General of the Carthusian order, and this was the letter he received from Albert Savarus:

"*Brother Albert to Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.*

"La Grande Chartreuse.

"I recognized your tender soul, dear and well-beloved Vicar-General, and your still youthful heart, in all that the reverend Father General of our Order has just told me. You have understood the only wish that lurks in the depths of my heart so far as the things of the world are concerned—to get justice done to my feelings by her who has treated me so badly! But before leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the General wanted to know that my vocation was sincere; he was so kind as to tell me his idea, on finding that I was determined to preserve absolute silence on this point. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the friar would have been rejected by this monastery. Grace has certainly done her work; but, though short, the struggle was not the less keen or the less painful. Is not this enough to show you that I could never return to the world?

"Hence my forgiveness, which you ask for the author of

so much woe, is entire and without a thought of vindictiveness. I will pray to God to forgive that young lady as I forgive her, and as I shall beseech him to give Madame de Rhétoré a life of happiness. Ah! whether it be death, or the obstinate hand of a young girl madly bent on being loved, or one of the blows ascribed to chance, must we not all obey God? Sorrow in some souls makes a vast void through which the Divine Voice rings. I learned too late the bearings of this life on that which awaits us; all in me is worn out; I could not serve in the ranks of the Church Militant, and I lay the remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the altar.

"This is the last time I shall ever write. You alone, who loved me, and whom I loved so well, could make me break the law of oblivion I imposed on myself when I entered these headquarters of Saint Bruno, but you are always especially named in the prayers of BROTHER ALBERT.

"*November, 1836.*"

"Everything is for the best perhaps," thought the Abbé de Grancey.

When he showed this letter to Rosalie, who, with a pious impulse, kissed the lines which contained her forgiveness, he said to her:

"Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not be reconciled to your mother and marry the Comte de Soulas?"

"Only if Albert should order it," said she.

"But you see it is impossible to consult him. The General of the Order would not allow it."

"If I were to go to see him?"

"No Carthusian sees any visitor. Besides, no woman but the Queen of France may enter a Carthusian monastery," said the Abbé. "So you have no longer any excuse for not marrying young Monsieur de Soulas."

"I do not wish to destroy my mother's happiness," retorted Rosalie.

"Satan!" exclaimed the Vicar-General.

Toward the end of that winter the worthy Abbé de Grancey died. This good friend no longer stood between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, to soften the impact of those two iron wills.

The event he had foretold took place. In the month of August, 1837, Madame de Watteville was married to Monsieur de Soulas in Paris, whither she went by Rosalie's advice, the girl making a show of kindness and sweetness to her mother. Madame de Watteville believed in this affection on the part of her daughter, who simply desired to go to Paris to give herself the luxury of a bitter revenge; she thought of nothing but avenging Savarus by torturing her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville had been declared legally of age; she was, in fact, not far from one-and-twenty. Her mother, to settle with her finally, had resigned her claims on les Rouxey, and the daughter had signed a release for all the inheritance of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and settle all her own fortune on him.

"Let us each be perfectly free," she said.

Madame de Soulas, who had been uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this liberality, and made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the funds as conscience money. As the Comtesse de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from her own lands, and was quite incapable of alienating them in order to diminish Rosalie's share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still a fortune to marry, of eighteen hundred thousand francs; les Rouxey, with the Baron's additions, and certain improvements, might yield twenty thousand francs a year, besides the value of the house, rents and preserves. So Rosalie and her mother, who soon adopted the Paris style and fashions, easily obtained introductions to the best society. The golden key—eighteen hundred thousand francs —embroidered on Mademoiselle de Watteville's stomacher, did more for the Comtesse de Soulas than her pretensions

à la de Rupt, her inappropriate pride, or even her rather distant great connections.

In the month of February, 1838, Rosalie, who was eagerly courted by many young men, achieved the purpose which had brought her to Paris. This was to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see this wonderful woman, and to overwhelm her with perennial remorse. Rosalie gave herself up to the most bewildering elegance and vanities in order to face the Duchess on an equal footing.

They first met at a ball given annually after 1830 for the benefit of the pensioners on the old Civil List. A young man, prompted by Rosalie, pointed her out to the Duchess, saying:

"There is a very remarkable young person, a strong-minded young lady too! She drove a clever man into a monastery—the Grande Chartreuse—a man of immense capabilities, Albert de Savarus, whose career she wrecked. She is Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous Besançon heiress—"

The Duchess turned pale. Rosalie's eyes met hers with one of those flashes which, between woman and woman, are more fatal than the pistol shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected that Albert might be innocent, hastily quitted the ball-room, leaving the speaker at his wits' end to guess what terrible blow he had inflicted on the beautiful Duchesse de Rhétoré.

"If you want to hear more about Albert, come to the Opera ball on Tuesday with a marigold in your hand."

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the Duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hand all Albert's letters, with that written to Léopold Hannequin by the Vicar General, and the notary's reply, and even that in which she had written her own confession to the Abbé de Grancey.

"I do not choose to be the only sufferer," she said to her rival, "for one has been as ruthless as the other."

After enjoying the dismay stamped on the Duchess's beautiful face, Rosalie went away; she went out no more, and returned to Besançon with her mother.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lived alone on her estate of les Rouxey, riding, hunting, refusing two or three offers a year, going to Besançon four or five times in the course of the winter, and busying herself with improving her land, was regarded as a very eccentric personage. She was one of the celebrities of the Eastern provinces.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl, and she has grown younger; but young Monsieur de Soulas has aged a good deal.

"My fortune has cost me dear," said he to young Chavoncourt. "Really to know a bigot it is unfortunately necessary to marry her!"

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves in the most extraordinary manner. "She has vagaries," people say. Every year she goes to gaze at the walls of the Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she dreams of imitating her granduncle by forcing the walls of the monastery to find a husband, as Watteville broke through those of his monastery to recover his liberty.

She left Besançon in 1841, intending, it was said, to get married; but the real reason of this expedition is still unknown, for she returned home in a state which forbids her ever appearing in society again. By one of those chances of which the Abbé de Grancey had spoken, she happened to be on the Loire in a steamboat of which the boiler burst. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face is marked with fearful scars, which have bereft her of her beauty; her health, cruelly upset, leaves her few days free from suffering. In short, she now never leaves the Chartreuse of les Rouxey, where she leads a life wholly devoted to religious practices.

PARIS, *May, 1842.*

A WOMAN OF THIRTY

PREFACE

THERE are not a few volumes of Balzac of which it is possible to speak with more editorial enthusiasm, perhaps indeed there is hardly any of which it is possible to speak with less, than of the volume which opens with "La Femme de Trente Ans." All its contents, or all with the exception of "Gobseck," are tainted with a kind of sentimentalism which, in Balzac's hands and to English taste, very rarely escapes a smack of the rancid; few of them exhibit him at his best as an artist, and one or two show him almost at his worst.

The least good of all—though its title and a very small part of its contents have had the honor to meet with an approval from Sainte-Beuve, which that critic did not always bestow upon Balzac's work—is the first or title-story. As M. de Lovenjoul's patient investigations have shown, and as the curiously wide date 1828–1844 would itself indicate to any one who has carefully studied Balzac's ways of proceeding, it is not really a single story at all, but consists of half a dozen chapters or episodes originally published at different times and in different places, and stuck together with so much less than even the author's usual attention to strict construction that the general title is totally inapplicable to the greater part of the book, and that the chronology of that part to which it does apply fits in very badly with the rest. This, however, is the least of the faults of the piece. It is more—though still not most—serious that Balzac never seems to have made up anything like a clear or consistent idea of Julie d'Aiglemont in his mind. First she is a selfish and thoughtless child; then an angelic and persecuted but faithful wife; then a somewhat facile victim to a very commonplace seducer, after resisting an exceptional one. So, again, she is first a devoted mother, then an almost

unnatural parent, and then again devoted, being punished *par où elle a pêché* once more. Even this, however, might have been atoned for by truth, or grace, or power of handling. I cannot find much of any of these things here. Not to mention the unsavoriness of part of Julie's trials, they are not such as, in me at least, excite any sympathy; and Balzac has drenched her with the sickly sentiment above noticed to an almost nauseous extent. Although he would have us take the Marquis as a brutal husband, he does not in effect represent him as such, but merely as a not very refined and rather clumsy "good fellow," who for his sins is cursed with a *mijaurée* of a wife. The Julie-Arthur love-passages are in the very worst style of "sensibility"; and though I fully acknowledge the heroism of my countryman Lord Arthur in allowing his fingers to be crushed and making no sign—although I question very much whether I could have done the same—I fear this romantic act does not suffice to give verisimilitude to a figure which is for the most part mere pasteboard, with sawdust inside and tinsel out. Many of the incidents, such as the pushing of the child into the water, and, still more, the scene on shipboard where the princely Corsair takes millions out of a piano and gives them away, have the crude and childish absurdity of the "Œuvres de Jeunesse," which they very much resemble, and with which, from the earliest date given, they may very probably have been contemporary. Those who are fortunate enough to find Julie, in her early afternoon of *femme incomprise*, attractive, may put up with these defects. I own that I am not quite able to find the compensation sufficient. The worst side of the French "sensibility" school from Rousseau to Madame de Stael appears here; and Balzac, genius as he was, had quite weak points enough of his own without borrowing other men's and women's.

"La Femme Abandonnée," with its two successors, rather belongs to that class of Balzac's stories to which I have elsewhere given the title of anecdotes. It is better than the title-story, or rather it has fewer and less various faults.

The first meeting of Madame de Beauséant and M. de Nueil is positively good; and the introduction, with its sketch of what Balzac knew or dreamed to be society, has the merit of most of his overtures. But the tale as a whole has the drawback of almost all this special class of love-stories, except "Adolphe"—from which so many of them were imitated, and which Balzac, I think, generally had in his mind when he attempted the style. Benjamin Constant, either by sheer literary skill, or as the result of transferring to his book an intense personal experience, has made the somewhat monotonous and unrelieved as well as illicit passion of his personages intensely real and touching. Balzac, here, has not. It is not Philistinism, but common-sense, which objects to M. de Nueil's neglect of the most sensible of proverbs about the old love and the new.

"Sensibility" pursues us still in "La Grenadière," and does not set us free in "Le Message," a story which, by the way, was much twisted about in its author's hands, and underwent transformations too long to be summarized here. It may be brutal to feel little or no sympathy with the woes and willow-wearing of the guilty and beautiful Madame Wilesens (otherwise Lady Brandon) by the water of Loire; but I confess that they leave me tearless, and I do not know that the subsequent appearances of Marie Gaston in "Deux Jeunes Mariées" and "Le Député d'Arcis" add to the attraction of this novelette. Jules Sandeau could have made a really touching thing of what was, I think, out of Balzac's way. "Le Message" was less so; there is a point of irony in it which commends itself to him, and which keeps it sweet and prevents it from sharing the mawkishness of the earlier stories. But it is slight.

In "Gobseck," though not entirely, we shake off this unwonted and uncongenial influence, and come to matters in which Balzac was much more at home. The hero himself is interesting, the story of Derville and Jenny escapes mawkishness, and all the scenes in which the Restauds and Maxime de Trailles figure are admirably done and well worth read-

ing. It is not necessary to take into consideration the important part which the Dutch Jew's granddaughter or grandniece Esther afterward plays in the "Comédie"—he is good in himself, and a famous addition to Balzac's gallery of misers, the most interesting, if not the most authentic, ever arranged on that curious subject. It is lucky that "Gobseck" comes last in the book, for it enables us to take a charitable leave of it.

It takes M. de Lovenjoul nearly three of his large pages of small type to give an exact bibliography of the extraordinary mosaic which bears the title of "La Femme de Trente Ans." It must be sufficient here to say that most of its parts appeared separately in different periodicals (notably the "Revue de Paris") during the very early thirties; that when in 1832 most of them appeared together in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" they were independent stories; and that when the author did put them together, he at first adopted the title "Même Histoire."

"La Femme Abandonnée" appeared in the "Revue de Paris" for September, 1832, was a "Scène de la Vie de Province" next year, and was shifted to the "Vie Privée" when the "Comédie" was first arranged. "La Grenadière" followed it in the same Review next month, and had the same subsequent history. The record of "Le Message" is much more complicated; and I must again refer those who wish to follow it exactly to M. de Lovenjoul. It is enough here to say that it at first appeared in the mid-February issue of the "Deux Mondes" for 1832, then complicated itself with "La Grande Bretêche" and its companion tales, and then imitated the stories which here precede it by being first a "provincial," and then, as it had already been, a "private" scene. "Gobseck," unlike all these, had no newspaper ushering, but was a "Scène de la Vie Privée" from the first use of that title in 1830. Its own title, however, "Les Dangers de l'Inconduite" and "Papa Gobseck," varied a little, and it once made an excursion to the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne," but returned.

A WOMAN OF THIRTY

TO LOUIS BOULANGER, PAINTER

I

EARLY MISTAKES

IT WAS A SUNDAY morning in the beginning of April, 1813, a morning which gave promise of one of those bright days when Parisians, for the first time in the year, behold dry pavements underfoot and a cloudless sky overhead. It was not yet noon when a luxurious cabriolet, drawn by two spirited horses, turned out of the Rue de Castiglione into the Rue de Rivoli, and drew up behind a row of carriages standing before the newly-opened barrier half-way down the Terrasse des Feuillants. The owner of the carriage looked anxious and out of health; the thin hair on his sallow temples, turning gray already, gave a look of premature age to his face. He flung the reins to a servant who followed on horseback, and alighted to take in his arms a young girl whose dainty beauty had already attracted the eyes of loungers on the Terrasse. The little lady, standing upon the carriage step, graciously submitted to be taken by the waist, putting an arm round the neck of her guide, who set her down upon the pavement without so much as ruffling the trimming of her green rep dress. No lover would have been so careful. The stranger could only be the father of the young girl, who took his arm familiarly without a word of thanks, and hurried him into the Garden of the Tuileries.

The old father noted the wondering stare which some of the young men gave the couple, and the sad expression left his face for a moment. Although he had long since

reached the time of life when a man is fain to be content with such illusory delights as vanity bestows, he began to smile.

"They think you are my wife," he said in the young lady's ear, and he held himself erect and walked with slow steps, which filled his daughter with despair.

He seemed to take up the coquette's part for her; perhaps of the two, he was the more gratified by the curious glances directed at those little feet, shod with plum-colored prunella; at the dainty figure outlined by a low-cut bodice, filled in with an embroidered chemisette, which only partially concealed the girlish throat. Her dress was lifted by her movements as she walked, giving glimpses higher than the shoes of delicately molded outlines beneath open-work silk stockings. More than one of the idlers turned and passed the pair again, to admire or to catch a second glimpse of the young face, about which the brown tresses played; there was a glow in its white and red, partly reflected from the rose-colored satin lining of her fashionable bonnet, partly due to the eagerness and impatience which sparkled in every feature. A mischievous sweetness lighted up the beautiful, almond-shaped dark eyes, bathed in liquid brightness, shaded by the long lashes and curving arch of eyebrow. Life and youth displayed their treasures in the petulant face and in the gracious outlines of the bust, unspoiled even by the fashion of the day, which brought the girdle under the breast.

The young lady herself appeared to be insensible to admiration. Her eyes were fixed in a sort of anxiety on the Palace of the Tuileries, the goal, doubtless, of her petulant promenade. It wanted but fifteen minutes of noon, yet even at that early hour several women in gala dress were coming away from the Tuileries, not without backward glances at the gates and pouting looks of discontent, as if they regretted the lateness of the arrival which had cheated them of a longed-for spectacle. Chance carried a few words let fall by one of these disappointed fair ones to the ears of the charming stranger, and put her in a more than common uneasiness. The elderly man watched the signs of impatience and appre-

hension which flitted across his companion's pretty face with interest, rather than amusement, in his eyes, observing her with a close and careful attention, which perhaps could only be prompted by some after-thought in the depths of a father's mind.

It was the thirteenth Sunday of the year 1813. In two days' time Napoleon was to set out upon the disastrous campaign in which he was to lose first Bessières, and then Duroc; he was to win the memorable battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, to see himself treacherously deserted by Austria, Saxony, Bavaria, and Bernadotte, and to dispute the dreadful field of Leipsic. The magnificent review commanded for that day by the Emperor was to be the last of so many which had long drawn forth the admiration of Paris and of foreign visitors. For the last time the Old Guard would execute their scientific military manœuvres with the pomp and precision which sometimes amazed the Giant himself. Napoleon was nearly ready for his duel with Europe. It was a sad sentiment which brought a brilliant and curious throng to the Tuileries. Each mind seemed to foresee the future, perhaps too in every mind another thought was dimly present, how that in that future, when the heroic age of France should have taken the half-fabulous color with which it is tinged for us to-day, men's imaginations would more than once seek to retrace the picture of the pageant which they were assembled to behold.

"Do let us go more quickly, father; I can hear the drums," the young girl said, and in a half teasing, half-coaxing manner she urged her companion forward.

"The troops are marching into the Tuileries," said he.

"Or marching out of it—everybody is coming away," she answered in childish vexation, which drew a smile from her father.

"The review only begins at half-past twelve," he said; he had fallen half behind his impetuous daughter.

It might have been supposed that she meant to hasten

their progress by the movement of her right arm, for it swung like an oar blade through the water. In her impatience she had crushed her handkerchief into a ball in her tiny, well-gloved fingers. Now and then the old man smiled, but the smiles were succeeded by an anxious look which crossed his withered face and saddened it. In his love for the fair young girl by his side, he was as fain to exalt the present moment as to dread the future. "She is happy to-day; will her happiness last?" he seemed to ask himself, for the old are somewhat prone to foresee their own sorrows in the future of the young.

Father and daughter reached the peristyle under the tower where the tricolor flag was still waving; but as they passed under the arch by which people came and went between the Gardens of the Tuileries and the Place du Carrousel, the sentries on guard called out sternly: "No admittance this way."

By standing on tiptoe the young girl contrived to catch a glimpse of a crowd of well-dressed women, thronging either side of the old marble arcade along which the Emperor was to pass.

"We were too late in starting, father; you can see that quite well." A little piteous pout revealed the immense importance which she attached to the sight of this particular review.

"Very well, Julie—let us go away. You dislike a crush."

"Do let us stay, father. Even here I may catch a glimpse of the Emperor; he might die during this campaign, and then I should never have seen him."

Her father shuddered at the selfish speech. There were tears in the girl's voice; he looked at her, and thought that he saw tears beneath her lowered eyelids; tears caused not so much by the disappointment as by one of the troubles of early youth, a secret easily guessed by an old father. Suddenly Julie's face flushed, and she uttered an exclamation. Neither her father nor the sentinels understood the meaning of the cry; but an officer within the barrier, who sprang

across the court toward the staircase, heard it, and turned abruptly at the sound. He went to the arcade by the Gardens of the Tuileries, and recognized the young lady who had been hidden for a moment by the tall bearskin caps of the grenadiers. He set aside in favor of the pair the order which he himself had given. Then, taking no heed of the murmurings of the fashionable crowd seated under the arcade, he gently drew the enraptured child toward him.

"I am no longer surprised at her vexation and enthusiasm, if *you* are in waiting," the old man said with a half-mocking, half-serious glance at the officer.

"If you want a good position, M. le Duc," the young man answered, "we must not spend any time in talking. The Emperor does not like to be kept waiting, and the Grand Marshal has sent me to announce our readiness."

As he spoke, he had taken Julie's arm with a certain air of old acquaintance, and drew her rapidly in the direction of the Place du Carrousel. Julie was astonished at the sight. An immense crowd was penned up in a narrow space, shut in between the gray walls of the palace and the limits marked out by chains round the great sanded squares in the midst of the courtyard of the Tuileries. The cordon of sentries posted to keep a clear passage for the Emperor and his staff had great difficulty in keeping back the eager humming swarm of human beings.

"Is it going to be a very fine sight?" Julie asked (she was radiant now).

"Pray take care!" cried her guide, and seizing Julie by the waist, he lifted her up with as much vigor as rapidity and set her down beside a pillar.

But for his prompt action, his gazing kinswoman would have come into collision with the hindquarters of a white horse which Napoleon's Mameluke held by the bridle; the animal in its trappings of green velvet and gold stood almost under the arcade, some ten paces behind the rest of the horses in readiness for the Emperor's staff.

The young officer placed the father and daughter in front

of the crowd in the first space to the right, and recommended them by a sign to the two veteran grenadiers on either side. Then he went on his way into the palace; a look of great joy and happiness had succeeded to his horror-struck expression when the horse backed. Julie had given his hand a mysterious pressure; had she meant to thank him for the little service he had done her, or did she tell him, "After all, I shall really see you?" She bent her head quite graciously in response to the respectful bow by which the officer took leave of them before he vanished.

The old man stood a little behind his daughter. He looked grave. He seemed to have left the two young people together for some purpose of his own, and now he furtively watched the girl, trying to lull her into false security by appearing to give his whole attention to the magnificent sight in the Place du Carrousel. When Julie's eyes turned to her father with the expression of a schoolboy before his master, he answered her glance by a gay, kindly smile, but his own keen eyes had followed the officer under the arcade, and nothing of all that passed was lost upon him.

"What a grand sight!" said Julie in a low voice, as she pressed her father's hand; and indeed the pomp and picturesqueness of the spectacle in the Place du Carrousel drew the same exclamation from thousands upon thousands of spectators, all agape with wonder. Another array of sightseers, as tightly packed as the ranks behind the old noble and his daughter, filled the narrow strip of pavement by the railings which crossed the Place du Carrousel from side to side in a line parallel with the Palace of the Tuileries. The dense living mass, variegated by the colors of the women's dresses, traced out a bold line across the centre of the Place du Carrousel, filling in the fourth side of a vast parallelogram, surrounded on three sides by the Palace of the Tuileries itself. Within the precincts thus railed off stood the regiments of the Old Guard about to be passed in review, drawn up opposite the Palace in imposing blue columns, ten ranks in depth. Without and beyond in the

Place du Carrousel stood several regiments likewise drawn up in parallel lines, ready to march in through the arch in the centre; the Triumphal Arch, where the bronze horses of St. Mark from Venice used to stand in those days. At either end, by the Galeries du Louvre, the regimental bands were stationed, masked by the Polish Lancers then on duty.

The greater part of the vast gravelled space was empty as an arena, ready for the evolutions of those silent masses disposed with the symmetry of military art. The sunlight blazed back from ten thousand bayonets in thin points of flame; the breeze ruffled the men's helmet plumes till they swayed like the crests of forest-trees before a gale. The mute glittering ranks of veterans were full of bright contrasting colors, thanks to their different uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and aigulets; and the whole great picture, that miniature battlefield before the combat, was framed by the majestic towering walls of the Tuileries, which officers and men seemed to rival in their immobility. Involuntarily the spectator made the comparison between the walls of men and the walls of stone. The spring sunlight, flooding white masonry reared but yesterday and buildings centuries old, shone full likewise upon thousands of bronzed faces, each one with its own tale of perils passed, each one gravely expectant of perils to come.

The colonels of the regiments came and went alone before the ranks of heroes; and behind the masses of troops, checkered with blue and silver and gold and purple, the curious could discern the tricolor pennons on the lances of some half-a-dozen indefatigable Polish cavalry, rushing about like shepherds' dogs in charge of a flock, caracoling up and down between the troops and the crowd, to keep the gazers within their proper bounds. But for this slight flutter of movement, the whole scene might have been taking place in the courtyard of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The very spring breeze, ruffling up the long fur on the grenadiers' bearskins, bore witness to the men's immobility, as the smothered murmur of the crowd emphasized

their silence. Now and again the jingling of Chinese bells, or a chance blow to a big drum, woke the reverberating echoes of the Imperial Palace with a sound like the far-off rumblings of thunder.

An indescribable, unmistakable enthusiasm was manifest in the expectancy of the multitude. France was about to take farewell of Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which the meanest citizen foresaw the perils. The existence of the French Empire was at stake—to be, or not to be. The whole citizen population seemed to be as much inspired with this thought as that other armed population standing in serried and silent ranks in the inclosed space, with the Eagles and the genius of Napoleon hovering above them.

Those very soldiers were the hope of France, her last drop of blood; and this accounted for not a little of the anxious interest of the scene. Most of the gazers in the crowd had bidden farewell—perhaps farewell forever—to the men who made up the rank and file of the battalions; and even those most hostile to the Emperor, in their hearts, put up fervent prayers to heaven for the glory of France; and those most weary of the struggle with the rest of Europe had left their hatreds behind as they passed in under the Triumphal Arch. They too felt that in the hour of danger Napoleon meant France herself.

The clock of the Tuileries struck the half-hour. In a moment the hum of the crowd ceased. The silence was so deep that you might have heard a child speak. The old noble and his daughter, wholly intent, seeming to live only by their eyes, caught a distinct sound of spurs and clank of swords echoing up under the sonorous peristyle.

And suddenly there appeared a short, somewhat stout figure in a green uniform, white trousers, and riding-boots; a man wearing on his head a cocked hat wellnigh as magically potent as its wearer; the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor rose and fell on his breast, and a short sword hung at his side. At one and the same moment the man was seen by all eyes in all parts of the square.

Immediately the drums beat a salute, both bands struck up a martial refrain, caught and repeated like a fugue by every instrument from the thinnest flutes to the largest drum. The clangor of that call to arms thrilled though every soul. The colors dropped, and the men presented arms, one unanimous rhythmical movement shaking every bayonet from the foremost front near the Palace to the last rank in the Place du Carrousel. The words of command sped from line to line like echoes. The whole enthusiastic multitude sent up a shout of "Long live the Emperor!"

Everything shook, quivered, and thrilled at last. Napoleon had mounted his horse. It was his movement that had put life into those silent masses of men; the dumb instruments had found a voice at his coming, the Eagles and the colors had obeyed the same impulse which had brought emotion into all faces.

The very walls of the high galleries of the old palace seemed to cry aloud, "Long live the Emperor!"

There was something preternatural about it—it was magic at work, a counterfeit presentment of the power of God; or rather it was a fugitive image of a reign itself so fugitive.

And *he* the centre of such love, such enthusiasm and devotion, and so many prayers, he for whom the sun had driven the clouds from the sky, was sitting there on his horse, three paces in front of his Golden Squadron, with the Grand Marshal on his left, and the Marshal-in-waiting on his right. Amid all the outburst of enthusiasm at his presence not a feature of his face appeared to alter.

"Oh! yes. At Wagram, in the thick of the firing, on the field of Borodino, among the dead, always as cool as a cucumber *he* is!" said the grenadier, in answer to the questions with which the young girl plied him. For a moment Julie was absorbed in the contemplation of that face, so quiet in the security of conscious power. The Emperor noticed Mlle. de Chatillonest, and leaned to make some brief remark to Duroc, which drew a smile from the Grand Marshal. Then the review began.

If hitherto the young lady's attention had been divided between Napoleon's impassive face and the blue, red, and green ranks of troops, from this time forth she was wholly intent upon a young officer moving among the lines as they performed their swift symmetrical evolutions. She watched him gallop with tireless activity to and from the group where the plainly dressed Napoleon shone conspicuous. The officer rode a splendid black horse. His handsome sky-blue uniform marked him out amid the variegated multitude as one of the Emperor's orderly staff-officers. His gold lace glittered in the sunshine which lighted up the aigret on his tall, narrow shako, so that the gazer might have compared him to a will-o'-the-wisp, or to a visible spirit emanating from the Emperor to infuse movement into those battalions whose swaying bayonets flashed into flames; for, at a mere glance from his eyes, they broke and gathered again, surging to and fro like the waves in a bay, or again swept before him like the long ridges of high-crested wave which the vexed Ocean directs against the shore.

When the manœuvres were over the officer galloped back at full speed, pulled up his horse, and awaited orders. He was not ten paces from Julie as he stood before the Emperor, much as General Rapp stands in Gérard's "Battle of Austerlitz." The young girl could behold her lover in all his soldierly splendor.

Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont, barely thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and well made. His well-proportioned figure never showed to better advantage than now as he exerted his strength to hold in the restive animal, whose back seemed to curve gracefully to the rider's weight. His brown masculine face possessed the indefinable charm of perfectly regular features combined with youth. The fiery eyes under the broad forehead, shaded by thick eyebrows and long lashes, looked like white ovals bordered by an outline of black. His nose had the delicate curve of an eagle's beak; the sinuous lines of the inevitable black mustache enhanced the crimson of the lips. The brown

and tawny shades which overspread the wide high-colored cheeks told a tale of unusual vigor, and his whole face bore the impress of dashing courage. He was the very model which French artists seek to-day for the typical hero of Imperial France. The horse which he rode was covered with sweat, the animal's quivering head denoted the last degree of restiveness; his hind hoofs were set down wide apart and exactly in a line, he shook his long thick tail to the wind; in his fidelity to his master he seemed to be a visible presentment of that master's devotion to the Emperor.

Julie saw her lover watching intently for the Emperor's glances, and felt a momentary pang of jealousy, for as yet he had not given her a look. Suddenly at a word from his sovereign Victor gripped his horse's flanks and set out at a gallop, but the animal took fright at a shadow cast by a post, shied, backed, and reared up so suddenly that his rider was all but thrown off. Julie cried out, her face grew white, people looked at her curiously, but she saw no one, her eyes were fixed upon the too mettlesome beast. The officer gave the horse a sharp admonitory cut with the whip, and galloped off with Napoleon's order.

Julie was so absorbed, so dizzy with sights and sounds, that unconsciously she clung to her father's arm so tightly that he could read her thoughts by the varying pressure of her fingers. When Victor was all but flung out of the saddle, she clutched her father with a convulsive grip as if she herself were in danger of falling, and the old man looked at his daughter's tell-tale face with dark and painful anxiety. Pity, jealousy, something even of regret stole across every drawn and wrinkled line of mouth and brow. When he saw the unwonted light in Julie's eyes, when that cry broke from her, when the convulsive grasp of her fingers drew away the veil and put him in possession of her secret, then with that revelation of her love there came surely some swift revelation of the future. Mournful forebodings could be read in his own face.

Julie's soul seemed at that moment to have passed into

the officer's being. A torturing thought more cruel than any previous dread contracted the old man's painworn features, as he saw the glance of understanding that passed between the soldier and Julie. The girl's eyes were wet, her cheeks glowed with unwonted color. Her father turned abruptly and led her away into the Garden of the Tuileries.

"Why, father," she cried, "there are still the regiments in the Place du Carrousel to be passed in review."

"No, child, all the troops are marching out."

"I think you are mistaken, father; M. d'Aiglemont surely told them to advance—"

"But I feel ill, my child, and I do not care to stay."

Julie could readily believe the words when she glanced at his face; he looked quite worn out by his father's anxieties.

"Are you feeling very ill?" she asked indifferently, her mind was so full of other thoughts.

"Every day is a reprieve for me, is it not?" returned her father.

"Now do you mean to make me miserable again by talking about your death? I was in such spirits! Do pray get rid of those horrid gloomy ideas of yours."

The father heaved a sigh. "Ah! spoiled child," he cried, "the best hearts are sometimes very cruel. We devote our whole lives to you, you are our one thought, we plan for your welfare, sacrifice our tastes to your whims, idolize you, give the very blood in our veins for you, and all this is nothing, is it? Alas! yes, you take it all as a matter of course. If we would always have your smiles and your disdainful love, we should need the power of God in heaven. Then comes another, a lover, a husband, and steals away your heart."

Julie looked in amazement at her father; he walked slowly along, and there was no light in the eyes which he turned upon her.

"You hide yourself even from us," he continued, "but, perhaps also you hide yourself from yourself—"

"What do you mean by that, father?"

"I think that you have secrets from me, Julie.—You love," he went on quickly, as he saw the color rise to her face. "Oh! I hoped that you would stay with your old father until he died. I hoped to keep you with me, still radiant and happy, to admire you as you were but so lately. So long as I knew nothing of your future I could believe in a happy lot for you; but now I cannot possibly take away with me a hope of happiness for your life, for you love the colonel even more than the cousin. I can no longer doubt it."

"And why should I be forbidden to love him?" asked Julie, with lively curiosity in her face.

"Ah, my Julie, you would not understand me," sighed the father.

"Tell me, all the same," said Julie, with an involuntary petulant gesture.

"Very well, child, listen to me. Girls are apt to imagine noble and enchanting and totally imaginary figures in their own minds; they have fanciful extravagant ideas about men, and sentiment, and life; and then they innocently endow somebody or other with all the perfections of their day-dreams, and put their trust in him. They fall in love with this imaginary creature in the man of their choice; and then, when it is too late to escape from their fate, behold their first idol, the illusion made fair with their fancies, turns to an odious skeleton. Julie, I would rather have you fall in love with an old man than with the Colonel. Ah! if you could but see things from the standpoint of ten years hence, you would admit that my old experience was right. I know what Victor is, that gayety of his is simply animal spirits—the gayety of the barracks. He has no ability, and he is a spend-thrift. He is one of those men whom Heaven created to eat and digest four meals a day, to sleep, to fall in love with the first woman that comes to hand, and to fight. He does not understand life. His kind heart, for he has a kind heart, will perhaps lead him to give his purse to a sufferer or to a comrade; *but* he is careless, he has not the delicacy of heart

which makes us slaves to a woman's happiness, he is ignorant, he is selfish. There are plenty of *buts*—"

"But, father, he must surely be clever, he must have ability, or he would not be a colonel—"

"My dear, Victor will be a colonel all his life.—I have seen no one who appears to me to be worthy of you," the old father added, with a kind of enthusiasm.

He paused an instant, looked at his daughter, and added, "Why, my poor Julie, you are still too young, too fragile, too delicate for the cares and rubs of married life. D'Aiglemont's relations have spoiled him, just as your mother and I have spoiled you. What hope is there that you two could agree, with two imperious wills diametrically opposed to each other? You will be either the tyrant or the victim, and either alternative means, for a wife, an equal sum of misfortune. But you are modest and sweet-natured, you would yield from the first. In short," he added, in a quivering voice, "there is a grace of feeling in you which would never be valued, and then—" he broke off, for the tears overcame him.

"Victor will give you pain through all the girlish qualities of your young nature," he went on, after a pause. "I know what soldiers are, my Julie; I have been in the army. In a man of that kind, love very seldom gets the better of old habits, due partly to the miseries amid which soldiers live, partly to the risks they run in a life of adventure."

"Then you mean to cross my inclinations, do you, father?" asked Julie, half in earnest, half in jest. "Am I to marry to please you and not to please myself?"

"To please me!" cried her father, with a start of surprise. "To please *me*, child? when you will not hear the voice that upbraids you so tenderly very much longer! But I have always heard children impute personal motives for the sacrifices that their parents make for them. Marry Victor, my Julie! Some day you will bitterly deplore his ineptitude, his thriftless ways, his selfishness, his lack of delicacy,

his inability to understand love, and countless troubles arising through him. Then, remember, that here under these trees your old father's prophetic voice sounded in your ears in vain."

He said no more; he had detected a rebellious shake of the head on his daughter's part. Both made several paces toward the carriage which was waiting for them at the grating. During that interval of silence, the young girl stole a glance at her father's face, and little by little her sullen brow cleared. The intense pain visible on his bowed forehead made a lively impression upon her.

"Father," she began in gentle, tremulous tones, "I promise to say no more about Victor until you have overcome your prejudices against him."

The old man looked at her in amazement. Two tears which filled his eyes overflowed down his withered cheeks. He could not take Julie in his arms in that crowded place; but he pressed her hand tenderly. A few minutes later when they had taken their places in the cabriolet, all the anxious thought which had gathered about his brow had completely disappeared. Julie's pensive attitude gave him far less concern than the innocent joy which had betrayed her secret during the review.

Nearly a year had passed since the Emperor's last review. In early March, 1814, a calèche was rolling along the high-road from Amboise to Tours. As the carriage came out from beneath the green-roofed aisle of walnut trees by the post-house of La Frillière, the horses dashed forward with such speed that in a moment they gained the bridge built across the Cise at the point of its confluence with the Loire. There, however, they came to a sudden stand. One of the traces had given way in consequence of the furious pace at which the post-boy, obedient to his orders, had urged on four horses, the most vigorous of their breed. Chance, therefore, gave the two recently awakened occupants of the carriage an opportunity of seeing one of the most lovely landscapes along

the enchanting banks of the Loire, and that at their full leisure.

At a glance the travellers could see to the right the whole winding course of the Cise meandering like a silver snake among the meadows, where the grass had taken the deep, bright green of early spring. To the left lay the Loire in all its glory. A chill morning breeze, ruffling the surface of the stately river, had fretted the broad sheets of water far and wide into a network of ripples, which caught the gleams of the sun, so that the green islets here and there in its course shone like gems set in a gold necklace. On the opposite bank the fair rich meadows of Touraine stretched away as far as the eye could see; the low hills of the Cher, the only limits to the view, lay on the far horizon, a luminous line against the clear blue sky. Tours itself, framed by the trees on the islands in a setting of spring leaves, seemed to rise like Venice out of the waters, and her old cathedral towers soaring in air were blended with the pale fantastic cloud-shapes in the sky.

Over the side of the bridge, where the carriage had come to a stand, the traveller looks along a line of cliffs stretching as far as Tours. Nature in some freakish mood must have raised these barriers of rock, undermined incessantly by the rippling Loire at their feet, for a perpetual wonder for spectators. The village of Vouvray nestles, as it were, among the clefts and crannies of the crags, which begin to describe a bend at the junction of the Loire and Cise. A whole population of vine-dressers lives, in fact, in appalling insecurity in holes in their jagged sides for the whole way between Vouvray and Tours. In some places there are three tiers of dwellings hollowed out, one above the other, in the rock, each row communicating with the next by dizzy staircases cut likewise in the face of the cliff. A little girl in a short red petticoat runs out into her garden on the roof of another dwelling; you can watch a wreath of hearth-smoke curling up among the shoots and trails of the vines. Men are at work in their almost perpendicular patches of ground, an old

woman sits tranquilly spinning under a blossoming almond tree on a crumbling mass of rock, and smiles down on the dismay of the travellers far below her feet. The cracks in the ground trouble her as little as the precarious state of the old wall, a pendent mass of loose stones, only kept in position by the crooked stems of its ivy mantle. The sound of coopers' mallets rings through the skyey caves; for here, where Nature stints human industry of soil, the soil is everywhere tilled, and everywhere fertile.

No view along the whole course of the Loire can compare with the rich landscape of Touraine, here outspread beneath the traveller's eyes. The triple picture, thus barely sketched in outline, is one of those scenes which the imagination engraves forever upon the memory; let a poet fall under its charm, and he shall be haunted by visions which shall reproduce its romantic loveliness out of the vague substance of dreams.

As the carriage stopped on the bridge over the Cise, white sails came out here and there from among the islands in the Loire to add new grace to the perfect view. The subtle scent of the willows by the water's edge was mingled with the damp odor of the breeze from the river. The monotonous chant of a goatherd added a plaintive note to the sound of birds' songs in a chorus which never ends; the cries of the boatmen brought tidings of distant busy life. Here was Touraine in all its glory, and the very height of the splendor of spring. Here was the one peaceful district in France in those troublous days; for it was so unlikely that a foreign army should trouble its quiet that Touraine might be said to defy invasion.

As soon as the calèche stopped, a head covered with a foraging cap was put out of the window, and soon afterward an impatient military man flung open the carriage door and sprang down into the road to pick a quarrel with the postilion, but the skill with which the Tourangeau was repairing the trace restored Colonel d'Aiglemont's equanimity. He went back to the carriage, stretched himself to relieve his

benumbed muscles, yawned, looked about him, and finally laid a hand on the arm of a young woman warmly wrapped up in a furred pelisse.

"Come, Julie," he said hoarsely, "just wake up and take a look at this country. It is magnificent."

Julie put her head out of the window. She wore a travelling cap of sable fur. Nothing could be seen of her but her face, for the whole of her person was completely concealed by the folds of her fur pelisse. The young girl who tripped to the review at the Tuileries with light footsteps and joy and gladness in her heart was scarcely recognizable in Julie d'Aiglemont. Her face, delicate as ever, had lost the rose-color which once gave it so rich a glow. A few straggling locks of black hair, straightened out by the damp night air, enhanced its dead whiteness, and all its life and sparkle seemed to be torpid. Yet her eyes glittered with preternatural brightness in spite of the violet shadows under the lashes upon her wan cheeks.

She looked out with indifferent eyes over the fields toward the Cher, at the islands in the river, at the line of the crags of Vouvray stretching along the Loire toward Tours; then she sank back as soon as possible into her seat in the calèche. She did not care to give a glance to the enchanting valley of the Cise.

"Yes, it is wonderful," she said, and out in the open air her voice sounded weak and faint to the last degree. Evidently she had had her way with her father, to her misfortune.

"Would you not like to live here, Julie?"

"Yes; here or anywhere," she answered listlessly.

"Do you feel ill?" asked Colonel d'Aiglemont.

"No, not at all," she answered with momentary energy; and, smiling at her husband, she added, "I should like to go to sleep."

Suddenly there came a sound of a horse galloping toward them. Victor d'Aiglemont dropped his wife's hand and turned to watch the bend in the road. No sooner had he

taken his eyes from Julie's pale face than all the assumed gayety died out of it; it was as if a light had been extinguished. She felt no wish to look at the landscape, no curiosity to see the horseman who was galloping toward them at such a furious pace, and, ensconcing herself in her corner, stared out before her at the hindquarters of the post-horses, looking as blank as any Breton peasant listening to his *recteur's* sermon.

Suddenly a young man riding a valuable horse came out from behind the clump of poplars and flowering briar-rose.

"It is an Englishman," remarked the Colonel.

"Lord bless you, yes, General," said the post-boy; "he belongs to the race of fellows who have a mind to gobble up France, they say."

The stranger was one of the foreigners travelling in France at the time when Napoleon detained all British subjects within the limits of the Empire, by way of reprisals for the violation of the Treaty of Amiens, an outrage of international law perpetrated by the Court of St. James. These prisoners, compelled to submit to the Emperor's pleasure, were not all suffered to remain in the houses where they were arrested, nor yet in the places of residence which at first they were permitted to choose. Most of the English colony in Touraine had been transplanted thither from different places where their presence was supposed to be inimical to the interests of the Continental Policy.

The young man, who was taking the tedium of the early morning hours on horseback, was one of these victims of bureaucratic tyranny. Two years previously, a sudden order from the Foreign Office had dragged him from Montpellier, whither he had gone on account of consumptive tendencies. He glanced at the Comte d'Aiglemont, saw that he was a military man, and deliberately looked away, turning his head somewhat abruptly toward the meadows by the Cise.

"The English are all as insolent as if the globe belonged

to them," muttered the Colonel. "Luckily, Soult will give them a thrashing directly."

The prisoner gave a glance to the calèche as he rode by. Brief though that glance was, he had yet time to notice the sad expression which lent an indefinable charm to the Countess's pensive face. Many men are deeply moved by the mere semblance of suffering in a woman; they take the look of pain for a sign of constancy or of love. Julie herself was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the opposite cushion that she saw neither the horse nor the rider. The damaged trace meanwhile had been quickly and strongly repaired; the Count stepped into his place again; and the post-boy, doing his best to make up for lost time, drove the carriage rapidly along the embankment. On they drove under the overhanging cliffs, with their picturesque vine-dressers' huts and stores of wine maturing in their dark sides, till in the distance up rose the spire of the famous Abbey of Marmoutiers, the retreat of St. Martin.

"What can that diaphanous milord want with us?" exclaimed the Colonel, turning to assure himself that the horseman who had followed them from the bridge was the young Englishman.

After all, the stranger committed no breach of good manners by riding along on the footway, and Colonel d'Aiglemont was fain to lie back in his corner after sending a scowl in the Englishman's direction. But in spite of his hostile instincts, he could not help noticing the beauty of the animal and the graceful horsemanship of the rider. The young man's face was of that pale, fair-complexioned, insular type, which is almost girlish in the softness and delicacy of its color and texture. He was tall, thin, and fair-haired, dressed with the extreme and elaborate neatness characteristic of a man of fashion in prudish England. Any one might have thought that bashfulness rather than pleasure at the sight of the Countess had called up that flush into his face. Once only Julie raised her eyes and looked at the stranger, and then only because she was in a manner compelled to do so,

for her husband called upon her to admire the action of the thoroughbred. It so happened that their glances clashed; and the shy Englishman, instead of riding abreast of the carriage, fell behind on this, and followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Yet the Countess had scarcely given him a glance; she saw none of the various perfections, human and equine, commended to her notice, and fell back again in the carriage with a slight movement of the eyelids intended to express her acquiescence in her husband's views. The Colonel fell asleep again, and both husband and wife reached Tours without another word. Not one of those enchanting views of ever-changing landscape through which they sped had drawn so much as a glance from Julie's eyes.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked now and again at her sleeping husband. While she looked, a sudden jolt shook something down upon her knees. It was her father's portrait, a miniature which she wore suspended about her neck by a black cord. At the sight of it, the tears, till then kept back, overflowed her eyes, but no one, save perhaps the Englishman, saw them glitter there for a brief moment before they dried upon her pale cheeks.

Colonel d'Aiglemont was on his way to the South. Marshal Soult was repelling an English invasion of Béarn; and d'Aiglemont, the bearer of the Emperor's orders to the Marshal, seized the opportunity of taking his wife as far as Tours to leave her with an elderly relative of his own, far away from the dangers threatening Paris.

Very shortly the carriage rolled over the paved road of Tours, over the bridge, along the Grande-Rue, and stopped at last before the old mansion of the *ci-devant* Marquise de Listomère-Landon.

The Marquise de Listomère-Landon, with her white hair, pale face, and shrewd smile, was one of those fine old ladies who still seem to wear the paniers of the eighteenth century, and affect caps of an extinct mode. They are nearly always caressing in their manners, as if the heyday of love still

lingered on for these septuagenarian portraits of the age of Louis Quinze, with the faint perfume of *poudre à la maréchale* always clinging about them. Bigoted rather than pious, and less of bigots than they seem, women who can tell a story well and talk still better, their laughter comes more readily for an old memory than for a new jest—the present intrudes upon them.

When an old waiting-woman announced to the Marquise de Listomère-Landon (to give her the title which she was soon to resume) the arrival of a nephew whom she had not seen since the outbreak of the war with Spain, the old lady took off her spectacles with alacrity, shut the "Galerie de l'ancienne Cour" (her favorite work), and recovered something like youthful activity, hastening out upon the flight of steps to greet the young couple there.

Aunt and niece exchanged a rapid glance of survey.

"Good-morning, dear aunt," cried the Colonel, giving the old lady a hasty embrace. "I am bringing a young lady to put under your wing. I have come to put my treasure in your keeping. My Julie is neither jealous nor a coquette, she is as good as an angel. I hope that she will not be spoiled here," he added, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Scapegrace!" returned the Marquise, with a satirical glance at her nephew.

She did not wait for her niece to approach her, but with a certain kindly graciousness went forward herself to kiss Julie, who stood there thoughtfully, to all appearance more embarrassed than curious concerning her new relation.

"So we are to make each other's acquaintance, are we, my love?" the Marquise continued. "Do not be too much alarmed of me. I always try not to be an old woman with young people."

On the way to the drawing-room, the Marquise ordered breakfast for her guests in provincial fashion; but the Count checked his aunt's flow of words by saying soberly that he could only remain in the house while the horses were changing. On this the three hurried into the drawing-room. The

Colonel had barely time to tell the story of the political and military events which had compelled him to ask his aunt for a shelter for his young wife. While he talked on without interruption, the older lady looked from her nephew to her niece, and took the sadness in Julie's white face for grief at the enforced separation. "Eh! eh!" her looks seemed to say, "these young things are in love with each other."

The crack of the postilion's whip sounded outside in the silent old grass-grown courtyard. Victor embraced his aunt once more, and rushed out.

"Good-by, dear," he said, kissing his wife, who had followed him down to the carriage.

"Oh! Victor, let me come still further with you," she pleaded coaxingly. "I do not want to leave you—"

"Can you seriously mean it?"

"Very well," said Julie, "since you wish it." The carriage disappeared.

"So you are very fond of my poor Victor?" said the Marquise, interrogating her niece with one of those sagacious glances which dowagers give younger women.

"Alas, madame!" said Julie, "must one not love a man well indeed to marry him?"

The words were spoken with an artless accent which revealed either a pure heart or inscrutable depths. How could a woman, who had been the friend of Duclos and the Maréchal de Richelieu, refrain from trying to read the riddle of this marriage? Aunt and niece were standing on the steps, gazing after the fast vanishing calèche. The look in the young Countess's eyes did not mean love as the Marquise understood it. The good lady was a Provençale, and her passions had been lively.

"So you were captivated by my good-for-nothing of a nephew?" she asked.

Involuntarily Julie shuddered, something in the experienced coquette's look and tone seemed to say that Mme. de Listomère-Landon's knowledge of her husband's character went perhaps deeper than his wife's. Mme. d'Aiglemont,

in dismay, took refuge in this transparent dissimulation, ready to her hand, the first resource of an artless unhappiness. Mme. de Listomère appeared to be satisfied with Julie's answers; but in her secret heart she rejoiced to think that here was a love affair on hand to enliven her solitude, for that her niece had some amusing flirtation on foot she was fully convinced.

In the great drawing-room, hung with tapestry framed in strips of gilding, young Mme. d'Aiglemont sat before a blazing fire, behind a Chinese screen placed to shut out the cold draughts from the windows, and her heavy mood scarcely lightened. Among the old eighteenth-century furniture, under the old panelled ceiling, it was not very easy to be gay. Yet the young Parisienne took a sort of pleasure in this entrance upon a life of complete solitude and in the solemn silence of the old provincial house. She exchanged a few words with the aunt, a stranger, to whom she had written a bride's letter on her marriage, and then sat as silent as if she had been listening to an opera. Not until two hours had been spent in an atmosphere of quiet befitting La Trappe did she suddenly awaken to a sense of uncourteous behavior, and bethink herself of the short answers which she had given her aunt. Mme. de Listomère, with the gracious tact characteristic of a bygone age, had respected her niece's mood. When Mme. d'Aiglemont became conscious of her shortcomings, the dowager sat knitting, though as a matter of fact she had several times left the room to superintend preparations in the Green Chamber, whither the Countess's luggage had been transported; now, however, she had returned to her great armchair, and stole a glance from time to time at this young relative. Julie felt ashamed of giving way to irresistible broodings, and tried to earn her pardon by laughing at herself.

"My dear child, *we* know the sorrows of widowhood," returned her aunt. But only the eyes of forty years could have distinguished the irony hovering about the old lady's mouth.

Next morning the Countess improved. She talked. Mme. de Listomère no longer despaired of fathoming the new-made wife, whom yesterday she had set down as a dull, unsociable creature, and discoursed on the delights of the country, of dances, of houses where they could visit. All that day the Marquise's questions were so many snares; it was the old habit of the old Court, she could not help setting traps to discover her niece's character. For several days Julie, plied with temptations, steadfastly declined to seek amusement abroad; and much as the old lady's pride longed to exhibit her pretty niece, she was fain to renounce all hope of taking her into society, for the young Countess was still in mourning for her father, and found in her loss and her mourning dress a pretext for her sadness and desire for seclusion.

By the end of a week the dowager admired Julie's angelic sweetness of disposition, her diffident charm, her indulgent temper, and thenceforward began to take a prodigious interest in the mysterious sadness gnawing at this young heart. The Countess was one of those women who seem born to be loved and to bring happiness with them. Mme. de Listomère found her niece's society grown so sweet and precious that she doted upon Julie, and could no longer think of parting with her. A month sufficed to establish an eternal friendship between the two ladies. The dowager noticed, not without surprise, the changes that took place in Mme. d'Aiglemont; gradually her bright color died away, and her face became dead white. Yet, Julie's spirits rose as the bloom faded from her cheeks. Sometimes the dowager's sallies provoked outbursts of merriment or peals of laughter, promptly repressed, however, by some clamorous thought.

Mme. de Listomère had guessed by this time that it was neither Victor's absence nor a father's death which threw a shadow over her niece's life; but her mind was so full of dark suspicions that she found it difficult to lay a finger upon the real cause of the mischief. Possibly truth is only

discoverable by chance. A day came, however, at length when Julie flashed out before her aunt's astonished eyes into a complete forgetfulness of her marriage; she recovered the wild spirits of careless girlhood. Mme. de Listomère then and there made up her mind to fathom the depths of this soul, for its exceeding simplicity was as inscrutable as dissimulation.

Night was falling. The two ladies were sitting by the window which looked out upon the street, and Julie was looking thoughtful again, when some one went by on horseback.

"There goes one of your victims," said the Marquise.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked up; dismay and surprise blended in her face.

"He is a young Englishman, the Honorable Arthur Ormond, Lord Grenville's eldest son. His history is interesting. His physicians sent him to Montpellier in 1802; it was hoped that in that climate he might recover from the lung complaint which was gaining ground. He was detained, like all his fellow-countrymen, by Bonaparte when war broke out. That monster cannot live without fighting. The young Englishman, by way of amusing himself, took to studying his own complaint, which was believed to be incurable. By degrees he acquired a liking for anatomy and physic, and took quite a craze for that kind of thing, a most extraordinary taste in a man of quality, though the Regent certainly amused himself with chemistry! In short, Monsieur Arthur made astonishing progress in his studies; his health did the same under the faculty of Montpellier; he consoled his captivity, and at the same time his cure was thoroughly completed. They say that he spent two whole years in a cowshed, living on cresses and the milk of a cow brought from Switzerland, breathing as seldom as he could, and never speaking a word. Since he came to Tours he has lived quite alone; he is as proud as a peacock; but you have certainly made a conquest of him, for probably it is not on my account that he has ridden under the window

twice every day since you have been here.—He has certainly fallen in love with you."

That last phrase roused the Countess like magic. Her involuntary start and smile took the Marquise by surprise. So far from showing a sign of the instinctive satisfaction felt by the most strait-laced of women when she learns that she has destroyed the peace of mind of some male victim, there was a hard, haggard expression in Julie's face—a look of repulsion amounting almost to loathing.

A woman who loves will put the whole world under the ban of Love's empire for the sake of the one whom she loves; but such a woman can laugh and jest; and Julie at that moment looked as if the memory of some recently escaped peril was too sharp and fresh not to bring with it a quick sensation of pain. Her aunt, by this time convinced that Julie did not love her nephew, was stupefied by the discovery that she loved nobody else. She shuddered lest a further discovery should show her Julie's heart disenchanted, lest the experience of a day, or perhaps of a night, should have revealed to a young wife the full extent of Victor's emptiness.

"If she has found him out, there is an end of it," thought the dowager. "My nephew will soon be made to feel the inconveniences of wedded life."

The Marquise now proposed to convert Julie to the monarchical doctrines of the times of Louis Quinze; but a few hours later she discovered, or, more properly speaking, guessed, the not uncommon state of affairs, and the real cause of her niece's low spirits.

Julie turned thoughtful on a sudden, and went to her room earlier than usual. When her maid left her for the night, she still sat by the fire in the yellow velvet depths of a great chair, an old-world piece of furniture as well suited for sorrow as for happy people. Tears flowed, followed by sighs and meditation. After a while she drew a little table to her, sought writing materials, and began to write. The hours went by swiftly. Julie's confidences made to the

sheet of paper seemed to cost her dear; every sentence set her dreaming, and at last she suddenly burst into tears. The clocks were striking two. Her head, grown heavy as a dying woman's, was bowed over her breast. When she raised it, her aunt appeared before her as suddenly as if she had stepped out of the background of tapestry upon the walls.

"What can be the matter with you, child?" asked the Marquise. "Why are you sitting up so late? And why, in the first place, are you crying alone, at your age?"

Without further ceremony she sat down beside her niece, her eyes the while devouring the unfinished letter.

"Were you writing to your husband?"

"Do I know where he is?" returned the Countess.

Her aunt thereupon took up the sheet and proceeded to read it. She had brought her spectacles; the deed was premeditated. The innocent writer of the letter allowed her to take it without the slightest remark. It was neither lack of dignity nor consciousness of secret guilt which left her thus without energy. Her aunt had come in upon her at a crisis. She was helpless; right or wrong, reticence and confidence, like all things else, were matters of indifference. Like some young maid who has heaped scorn upon her lover, and feels so lonely and sad when evening comes, that she longs for him to come back or for a heart to which she can pour out her sorrow, Julie allowed her aunt to violate the seal which honor places upon an open letter, and sat musing while the Marquise read on:

"My dear Louisa—Why do you ask so often for the fulfilment of as rash a promise as two young and inexperienced girls could make? You say that you often ask yourself why I have given no answer to your questions for these six months. If my silence told you nothing, perhaps you will understand the reasons for it to-day, as you read the secrets which I am about to betray. I should have buried them forever in the depths of my heart if you had

not announced your own approaching marriage. You are about to be married, Louisa. The thought makes me shiver. Poor little one! marry, yes, and in a few months' time one of the keenest pangs of regret will be the recollection of a self which used to be, of the two young girls who sat one evening under one of the tallest oak-trees on the hillside at Ecouen, and looked along the fair valley at our feet in the light of the sunset, which caught us in its glow. We sat on a slab of rock in ecstasy, which sobered down into melancholy of the gentlest. You were the first to discover that the far-off sun spoke to us of the future. How inquisitive and how silly we were! Do you remember all the absurd things we said and did? We embraced each other; 'like lovers,' said we. We solemnly promised that the first bride should faithfully reveal to the other the mysteries of marriage, the joys which our childish minds imagined to be so delicious. That evening will complete your despair, Louisa. In those days you were young and beautiful and careless, if not radiantly happy; a few days of marriage, and you will be, what I am already—ugly, wretched, and old. Need I tell you how proud I was and how vain and glad to be married to Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont? And besides, how could I tell you now? for I cannot remember that old self. A few moments turned my girlhood to a dream. All through the memorable day which consecrated a chain, the extent of which was hidden from me, my behavior was not free from reproach. Once and again my father tried to repress my spirits; the joy which I showed so plainly was thought unbefitting the occasion, my talk scarcely innocent, simply because I was so innocent. I played endless child's tricks with my bridal veil, my wreath, my gown. Left alone that night in the room whither I had been conducted in state, I planned a piece of mischief to tease Victor. While I awaited his coming, my heart beat wildly, as it used to do when I was a child stealing into the drawing-room on the last day of the old year to catch a glimpse of the New

Year's gifts piled up there in heaps. When my husband came in and looked for me, my smothered laughter ringing out from beneath the lace in which I had shrouded myself, was the last outburst of the delicious merriment which brightened our games in childhood . . ."

When the dowager had finished reading the letter, and after such a beginning the rest must have been sad indeed, she slowly laid her spectacles on the table, put the letter down beside them, and looked fixedly at her niece. Age had not dimmed the fire in those green eyes as yet.

"My little girl," she said, "a married woman cannot write such a letter as this to a young unmarried woman; it is scarcely proper—"

"So I was thinking," Julie broke in upon her aunt. "I felt ashamed of myself while you were reading it."

"If a dish at table is not to our taste, there is no occasion to disgust others with it, child," the old lady continued benignly, "especially when marriage has seemed to us all, from Eve downward, so excellent an institution. . . . You have no mother?"

The Countess trembled, then she raised her face meekly, and said:

"I have missed my mother many times already during the past year; but I have myself to blame, I would not listen to my father. He was opposed to my marriage; he disapproved of Victor as a son-in-law."

She looked at her aunt. The old face was lighted up with a kindly look, and a thrill of joy dried Julie's tears. She held out her young, soft hand to the old Marquise, who seemed to ask for it, and the understanding between the two women was completed by the close grasp of their fingers.

"Poor orphan child!"

The words came like a final flash of enlightenment to Julie. It seemed to her that she heard her father's prophetic voice again.

"Your hands are burning! Are they always like this?" asked the Marquise.

"The fever only left me seven or eight days ago."

"You had a fever upon you, and said nothing about it to me!"

"I have had it for a year," said Julie, with a kind of timid anxiety.

"My good little angel, then your married life hitherto has been one long time of suffering?"

Julie did not venture to reply, but an affirmative sign revealed the whole truth.

"Then you are unhappy?"

"Oh! no, no, aunt. Victor loves me, he almost idolizes me, and I adore him, he is so kind."

"Yes, you love him; but you avoid him, do you not?"

"Yes . . . sometimes. . . . He seeks me too often."

"And often when you are alone you are troubled with the fear that he may suddenly break in upon your solitude?"

"Alas! yes, aunt. But, indeed, I love him, I do assure you."

"Do you not, in your own thoughts, blame yourself because you find it impossible to share his pleasures? Do you never think at times that marriage is a heavier yoke than an illicit passion could be?"

"Oh! that is just it," she wept. "It is all a riddle to me, and can you guess it all? My faculties are benumbed, I have no ideas, I can scarcely see at all. I am weighed down by vague dread, which freezes me till I cannot feel, and keeps me in continual torpor. I have no voice with which to pity myself, no words to express my trouble. I suffer, and I am ashamed to suffer when Victor is happy at my cost."

"Babyish nonsense, and rubbish, all of it!" exclaimed the aunt, and a gay smile, an after-glow of the joys of her own youth, suddenly lighted up her withered face.

"And do you too laugh!" the younger woman cried despairingly.

"It was just my own case," the Marquise returned promptly. "And now that Victor has left you, you have become a girl again, recovering a tranquillity without pleasure and without pain, have you not?"

Julie opened wide eyes of bewilderment.

"In fact, my angel, you adore Victor, do you not? But still you would rather be a sister to him than a wife, and, in short, your marriage is emphatically not a success?"

"Well—no, aunt. But why do you smile?"

"Oh! you are right, poor child! There is nothing very amusing in all this. Your future would be big with more than one mishap if I had not taken you under my protection, if my old experience of life had not guessed the very innocent cause of your troubles. My nephew did not deserve his good fortune, the blockhead! In the reign of our well-beloved Louis Quinze, a young wife in your position would very soon have punished her husband for behaving like a ruffian. The selfish creature! The men who serve under this Imperial tyrant are all of them ignorant boors. They take brutality for gallantry; they know no more of women than they know of love; and imagine that, because they go out to face death on the morrow, they may dispense to-day with all consideration and attentions for us. The time was when a man could love and die too at the proper time. My niece, I will form you. I will put an end to this unhappy divergence between you, a natural thing enough, but it would end in mutual hatred and desire for a divorce, always supposing that you did not die on the way to despair."

Julie's amazement equalled her surprise as she listened to her aunt. She was surprised by her language, dimly divining rather than appreciating the wisdom of the words she heard, and very much dismayed to find that this relative, out of a great experience, passed judgment upon Victor as her father had done, though in somewhat milder terms. Perhaps some quick prevision of the future crossed her mind; doubtless, at any rate, she felt the heavy weight

of the burden which must inevitably overwhelm her, for she burst into tears, and sprang to the old lady's arms. "Be my mother," she sobbed.

The aunt shed no tears. The Revolution had left old ladies of the Monarchy but few tears to shed. Love, in bygone days, and the Terror at a later time, had familiarized them with extremes of joy and anguish in such a sort that, amid the perils of life, they preserved their dignity and coolness, a capacity for sincere but undemonstrative affection which never disturbed their well-bred self-possession, and a dignity of demeanor which a younger generation has done very ill to discard.

The dowager took Julie in her arms, and kissed her on the forehead with a tenderness and pity more often found in women's ways and manner than in their hearts. Then she coaxed her niece with kind, soothing words, assured her of a happy future, lulled her with promises of love, and put her to bed as if she had been not a niece, but a daughter, a much-loved daughter whose hopes and cares she had made her own. Perhaps the old Marquise had found her own youth and inexperience and beauty again in this nephew's wife. And the Countess fell asleep, happy to have found a friend, nay, a mother, to whom she could tell everything freely.

Next morning, when the two women kissed each other with heartfelt kindness, and that look of intelligence which marks a real advance in friendship, a closer intimacy between two souls, they heard the sound of horsehoofs, and, turning both together, saw the young Englishman ride slowly past the window, after his wont. Apparently he had made a certain study of the life led by the two lonely women, for he never failed to ride by as they sat at breakfast, and again at dinner. His horse slackened pace of its own accord, and for the space of time required to pass the two windows in the room, its rider turned a melancholy look upon the Countess, who seldom deigned to take the slightest notice of him. Not so the Marquise. Minds not

necessarily little find it difficult to resist the little curiosity which fastens upon the most trifling event that enlivens provincial life; and the Englishman's mute way of expressing his timid, earnest love tickled Mme. de Listomère. For her the periodically recurrent glance became a part of the day's routine, hailed daily with new jests. As the two women sat down to table, both of them looked out at the same moment. This time Julie's eyes met Arthur's with such a precision of sympathy that the color rose to her face. The stranger immediately urged his horse into a gallop and went.

"What is to be done, madame?" asked Julie. "People see this Englishman go past the house, and they will take it for granted that I—"

"Yes," interrupted her aunt.

"Well, then, could I not tell him to discontinue his promenades?"

"Would not that be a way of telling him that he was dangerous? You might put that notion into his head. And besides, can you prevent a man from coming and going as he pleases? Our meals shall be served in another room to-morrow; and when this young gentleman sees us no longer, there will be an end of making love to you through the window. There, dear child, that is how a woman of the world does."

But the measure of Julie's misfortune was to be filled up. The two women had scarcely risen from table when Victor's man arrived in hot haste from Bourges with a letter for the Countess from her husband. The servant had ridden by unfrequented ways.

Victor sent his wife news of the downfall of the Empire and the capitulation of Paris. He himself had gone over to the Bourbons, and all France was welcoming them back with transports of enthusiasm. He could not go so far as Tours, but he begged her to come at once to join him at Orleans, where he hoped to be in readiness with passports for her. His servant, an old soldier, would be her escort

as far as Orleans; he (Victor) believed that the road was still open.

"You have not a moment to lose, madame," said the man. "The Prussians, Austrians, and English are about to effect a junction either at Blois or at Orleans."

A few hours later, Julie's preparations were made, and she started out upon her journey in an old travelling carriage lent by her aunt.

"Why should you not come with us to Paris?" she asked, as she put her arms about the Marquise. "Now that the Bourbons have come back, you would be—"

"Even if there had not been this unhoped-for return, I should still have gone to Paris, my poor child, for my advice is only too necessary to both you and Victor. So I shall make all my preparations for rejoining you there."

Julie set out. She took her maid with her, and the old soldier galloped beside the carriage as escort. At nightfall, as they changed horses for the last stage before Blois, Julie grew uneasy. All the way from Amboise she had heard the sound of wheels behind them, a carriage following hers had kept at the same distance. She stood on the step and looked out to see who her travelling companions might be, and in the moonlight saw Arthur standing three paces away, gazing fixedly at the chaise which contained her. Again their eyes met. The Countess hastily flung herself back in her seat, but a feeling of dread set her pulses throbbing. It seemed to her, as to most innocent and inexperienced young wives, that she was herself to blame for this love which she had all unwittingly inspired. With this thought came an instinctive terror, perhaps a sense of her own helplessness before aggressive audacity. One of a man's strongest weapons is the terrible power of compelling a woman to think of him when her naturally lively imagination takes alarm or offence at the thought that she is followed.

The Countess bethought herself of her aunt's advice, and made up her mind that she would not stir from her place during the rest of the journey; but every time the horses

were changed she heard the Englishman pacing round the two carriages, and again upon the road heard the importunate sound of the wheels of his calèche. Julie soon began to think that, when once reunited to her husband, Victor would know how to defend her against this singular persecution.

"Yet suppose that in spite of everything this young man does not love me?" This was the thought that came last of all.

No sooner did she reach Orleans than the Prussians stopped the chaise. It was wheeled into an innyard and put under a guard of soldiers. Resistance was out of the question. The foreign soldiers made the three travellers understand by signs that they were obeying orders, and that no one could be allowed to leave the carriage. For about two hours the Countess sat in tears, a prisoner surrounded by the guard, who smoked, laughed, and occasionally stared at her with insolent curiosity. At last, however, she saw her captors fall away from the carriage with a sort of respect, and heard at the same time the sound of horses entering the yard. Another moment, and a little group of foreign officers, with an Austrian general at their head, gathered about the door of the travelling carriage.

"Madame," said the General, "pray accept our apologies. A mistake has been made. You may continue your journey without fear; and here is a passport which will spare you all further annoyance of any kind."

Tremblingly the Countess took the paper, and faltered out some vague words of thanks. She saw Arthur, now wearing an English uniform, standing beside the General, and could not doubt that this prompt deliverance was due to him. The young Englishman himself looked half glad, half melancholy; his face was turned away, and he only dared to steal an occasional glance at Julie's face.

Thanks to the passport, Mme. d'Aiglemont reached Paris without further misadventure, and there she found her husband. Victor d'Aiglemont, released from his oath of allegiance to the Emperor, had met with a most flattering recep-

tion from the Comte d'Artois, recently appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom by his brother Louis XVIII. D'Aiglemont received a commission in the Life Guards, equivalent to the rank of general. But amid the rejoicings over the return of the Bourbons, fate dealt poor Julie a terrible blow. The death of the Marquise de Listomère-Landon was an irreparable loss. The old lady died of joy and of an accession of gout to the heart when the Duc d'Angoulême came back to Tours, and the one living being entitled by her age to enlighten Victor, the woman who, by discreet counsels, might have brought about perfect unanimity of husband and wife, was dead; and Julie felt the full extent of her loss: henceforward she must stand alone between herself and her husband. But she was young and timid; there could be no doubt of the result, or that from the first she would elect to bear her lot in silence. The very perfection of her character forbade her to venture to swerve from her duties, or to attempt to inquire into the cause of her sufferings, for to put an end to them would have been to venture on delicate ground, and Julie's girlish modesty shrank from the thought.

A word as to M. d'Aiglemont's destinies under the Restoration.

How many men are there whose utter incapacity is a secret kept from most of their acquaintance. For such as these high rank, high office, illustrious birth, a certain veneer of politeness, and considerable reserve of manner, or the *prestige* of great fortunes, are but so many sentinels to turn back critics who would penetrate to the presence of the real man. Such men are like kings, in that their real figure, character and life can never be known nor justly appreciated, because they are always seen from too near or too far. Factitious merit has a way of asking questions and saying little; and understands the art of putting others forward to save the necessity of posing before them; then, with a happy knack of its own, it draws and attaches others by the thread of the ruling passion or self-interest, keeping men of far greater

abilities in play like puppets, and despising those whom it has brought down to its own level. The petty fixed idea naturally prevails; it has the advantage of persistence over the plasticity of great thoughts.

The observer who should seek to estimate and appraise the negative values of these empty heads needs subtlety rather than superior wit for the task; patience is a more necessary part of his judicial outfit than great mental grasp, cunning and tact rather than any elevation or greatness of ideas. Yet skilfully as such usurpers can cover and defend their weak points, it is difficult to delude wife and mother and children and the house-friend of the family; fortunately for them, however, these persons almost always keep a secret which in a manner touches the honor of all, and not infrequently go so far as to help to foist the imposture upon the public. And if, thanks to such domestic conspiracy, many a noodle passes current for a man of ability, on the other hand many another who has real ability is taken for a noodle to redress the balance, and the total average of this kind of false coin in circulation in the state is a pretty constant quantity.

Bethink yourself now of the part to be played by a clever woman quick to think and feel, mated with a husband of this kind, and can you not see a vision of lives full of sorrow and self-sacrifice? Nothing upon earth can repay such hearts so full of love and tender tact. Put a strong-willed woman in this wretched situation, and she will force a way out of it for herself by a crime, like Catherine II., whom men nevertheless style "the Great." But these women are not all seated upon thrones, they are for the most part doomed to domestic unhappiness none the less terrible because obscure.

Those who seek consolation in this present world for their woes often effect nothing but a change of ills if they remain faithful to their duties; or they commit a sin if they break the laws for their pleasure. All these reflections are applicable to Julie's domestic life.

Before the fall of Napoleon nobody was jealous of d'Aigle-

mont. He was one colonel among many, an efficient orderly staff-officer, as good a man as you could find for a dangerous mission, as unfit as well could be for an important command. D'Aiglemont was looked upon as a dashing soldier such as the Emperor liked, the kind of man whom his mess usually calls "a good fellow." The Restoration gave him back his title of Marquis, and did not find him ungrateful; he followed the Bourbons into exile at Ghent, a piece of logical loyalty which falsified the horoscope drawn for him by his late father-in-law, who predicted that Victor would remain a colonel all his life. After the Hundred Days he received the appointment of Lieutenant-General, and for the second time became a marquis; but it was M. d'Aiglemont's ambition to be a peer of France. He adopted, therefore, the maxims and the politics of the *Conservateur*, cloaked himself in dissimulation which hid nothing (there being nothing to hide), cultivated gravity of countenance and the art of asking questions and saying little, and was taken for a man of profound wisdom. Nothing drew him from his intrenchments behind the forms of politeness; he laid in a provision of formulas, and made lavish use of his stock of the catch-words coined at need in Paris to give fools the small change for the ore of great ideas and events. Among men of the world he was reputed a man of taste and discernment; and as a bigoted upholder of aristocratic opinions he was held up for a noble character. If by chance he slipped now and again into his old light-heartedness or levity, others were ready to discover an under-current of diplomatic intention beneath his inanity and silliness. "Oh! he only says exactly as much as he means to say," thought these excellent people.

So d'Aiglemont's defects and good qualities stood him alike in good stead. He did nothing to forfeit a high military reputation gained by his dashing courage, for he had never been a commander-in-chief. Great thoughts surely were engraven upon that manly aristocratic countenance, which imposed upon every one but his own wife. And when everybody else believed in the Marquis d'Aiglemont's

imaginary talents, the Marquis persuaded himself before he had done that he was one of the most remarkable men at Court, where, thanks to his purely external qualifications, he was in favor and taken at his own valuation.

At home, however, M. d'Aiglemont was modest. Instinctively he felt that his wife, young though she was, was his superior; and out of this involuntary respect there grew an occult power which the Marquise was obliged to wield in spite of all her efforts to shake off the burden. She became her husband's adviser, the director of his actions and his fortunes. It was an unnatural position; she felt it as something of a humiliation, a source of pain to be buried in the depths of her heart. From the first her delicately feminine instinct told her that it is a far better thing to obey a man of talent than to lead a fool; and that a young wife compelled to act and think like a man is neither man nor woman, but a being who lays aside all the charms of her womanhood along with its misfortunes, yet acquires none of the privileges which our laws give to the stronger sex. Beneath the surface her life was a bitter mockery. Was she not compelled to protect her protector, to worship a hollow idol, a poor creature who flung her the love of a selfish husband as the wages of her continual self-sacrifice; who saw nothing in her but the woman; and who either did not think it worth while, or (wrong quite as deep) did not think at all of troubling himself about her pleasures, of inquiring into the cause of her low spirits and dwindling health? And the Marquis, like most men who chafe under a wife's superiority, saved his self-love by arguing from Julie's physical feebleness a corresponding lack of mental power, for which he was pleased to pity her; and he would cry out upon fate which had given him a sickly girl for a wife. The executioner posed, in fact, as the victim.

All the burdens of this dreary lot fell upon the Marquise, who still must smile upon her foolish lord, and deck a house of mourning with flowers, and make a parade of happiness in a countenance wan with secret torture. And with this sense

of responsibility for the honor of both, with the magnificent immolation of self, the young Marquise unconsciously acquired a wifely dignity, a consciousness of virtue which became her safeguard amid many dangers.

Perhaps, if her heart were sounded to the very depths, this intimate closely-hidden wretchedness, following upon her unthinking girlish first love, had roused in her an abhorrence of passion; possibly she had no conception of its rapture, nor of forbidden but frenzied bliss for which some women will renounce all the laws of prudence and the principles of conduct upon which society is based. She put from her like a dream the thought of bliss and tender harmony of love promised by Mme. de Listomère-Landon's mature experience, and waited resignedly for the end of her troubles with a hope that she might die young.

Her health had declined daily since her return from Touraine; her life seemed to be measured to her in suffering; yet her ill-health was graceful, her malady seemed little more than languor, and might well be taken by careless eyes for a fine lady's whim of invalidism.

Her doctors had condemned her to keep to the sofa, and there among her flowers lay the Marquise, fading as they faded. She was not strong enough to walk, nor to bear the open air, and only went out in a closed carriage. Yet with all the marvels of modern luxury and invention about her, she looked more like an indolent queen than an invalid. A few of her friends, half in love perhaps with her sad plight and her fragile look, sure of finding her at home, and speculating no doubt upon her future restoration to health, would come to bring her the news of the day, and kept her informed of the thousand and one small events which fill life in Paris with variety. Her melancholy, deep and real though it was, was still the melancholy of a woman rich in many ways. The Marquise d'Aiglemont was like some bright flower, with a dark insect gnawing at its root.

Occasionally she went into society, not to please herself, but in obedience to the exigencies of the position which her

husband aspired to take. In society her beautiful voice and the perfection of her singing could always gain the social success so gratifying to a young woman; but what was social success to her, who drew nothing from it for her heart or her hopes? Her husband did not care for music. And, moreover, she seldom felt at her ease in salons, where her beauty attracted homage not wholly disinterested. Her position excited a sort of cruel compassion, a morbid curiosity. She was suffering from an inflammatory complaint not infrequently fatal, for which our nosology as yet has found no name, a complaint spoken of among women in confidential whispers. In spite of the silence in which her life was spent, the cause of her ill-health was no secret. She was still but a girl in spite of her marriage; the slightest glance threw her into confusion. In her endeavor not to blush, she was always laughing, always apparently in high spirits; she would never admit that she was not perfectly well, and anticipated questions as to her health by shame-stricken subterfuges.

In 1817, however, an event took place which did much to alleviate Julie's hitherto deplorable existence. A daughter was born to her, and she determined to nurse her child herself. For two years motherhood, its all-absorbing multiplicity of cares and anxious joys, made life less hard for her. She and her husband lived necessarily apart. Her physicians predicted improved health, but the Marquise herself put no faith in these auguries based on theory. Perhaps, like many a one for whom life has lost its sweetness, she looked forward to death as a happy termination of the drama.

But with the beginning of the year 1819 life grew harder than ever. Even while she congratulated herself upon the negative happiness which she had contrived to win, she caught a terrifying glimpse of yawning depths below it. She had passed by degrees out of her husband's life. Her fine tact and her prudence told her that misfortune must come, and that not singly, of this cooling of an affection

already lukewarm and wholly selfish. Sure though she was of her ascendency over Victor, and certain as she felt of his unalterable esteem, she dreaded the influence of unbridled passions upon a head so empty, so full of rash self-conceit.

Julie's friends often found her absorbed in prolonged musings; the less clairvoyant among them would jestingly ask her what she was thinking about, as if a young wife would think of nothing but frivolity, as if there were not always a depth of seriousness in a mother's thoughts. Unhappiness, like great happiness, induces dreaming. Sometimes as Julie played with her little Hélène, she would gaze darkly at her, giving no reply to the childish questions in which a mother delights, questioning the present and the future as to the destiny of this little one. Then some sudden recollection would bring back the scene of the review at the Tuileries and fill her eyes with tears. Her father's prophetic warnings rang in her ears, and conscience reproached her that she had not recognized its wisdom. Her troubles had all come of her own wayward folly, and often she knew not which among so many was the hardest to bear. The sweet treasures of her soul were unheeded, and not only so, she could never succeed in making her husband understand her, even in the commonest every-day things. Just as the power to love developed and grew strong and active, a legitimate channel for the affections of her nature was denied her, and wedded love was extinguished in grave physical and mental sufferings. Add to this that she now felt for her husband that pity closely bordering upon contempt which withers all affection at last. Even if she had not learned from conversations with some of her friends, from examples in life, from sundry occurrences in the great world, that love can bring ineffable bliss, her own wounds would have taught her to divine the pure and deep happiness which binds two kindred souls each to each.

In the picture which her memory traced of the past, Arthur's frank face stood out daily nobler and purer; it was but a flash, for upon that recollection she dared not

dwell. The young Englishman's shy, silent love for her was the one event since her marriage which had left a lingering sweetness in her darkened and lonely heart. It may be that all the blighted hopes, all the frustrated longings which gradually clouded Julie's mind, gathered, by a not unnatural trick of imagination, about this man—whose manners, sentiments, and character seemed to have so much in common with her own. This idea still presented itself to her mind fitfully and vaguely, like a dream; yet from that dream, which always ended in a sigh, Julie awoke to greater wretchedness, to keener consciousness of the latent anguish brooding beneath her imaginary bliss.

Occasionally her self-pity took wilder and more daring flights. She determined to have happiness at any cost; but still more often she lay a helpless victim of an indescribable numbing stupor, the words she heard had no meaning to her, or the thoughts which arose in her mind were so vague and indistinct that she could not find language to express them. Balked of the wishes of her heart, realities jarred harshly upon her girlish dreams of life, but she was obliged to devour her tears. To whom could she make complaint? Of whom be understood? She possessed, moreover, that highest degree of woman's sensitive pride, the exquisite delicacy of feeling which silences useless complainings and declines to use an advantage to gain a triumph which can only humiliate both victor and vanquished.

Julie tried to endow M. d'Aiglemont with her own abilities and virtues, flattering herself that thus she might enjoy the happiness lacking in her lot. All her woman's ingenuity and tact was employed in making the best of the situation; pure waste of pains unsuspected by him, whom she thus strengthened in his despotism. There were moments when misery became an intoxication, expelling all ideas, all self-control; but, fortunately, sincere piety always brought her back to one supreme hope; she found a refuge in the belief in a future life, a wonderful thought which enabled her to take up her painful task afresh. No elation of victory

followed those terrible inward battles and throes of anguish; no one knew of those long hours of sadness; her haggard glances met no response from human eyes, and during the brief moments snatched by chance for weeping, her bitter tears fell unheeded and in solitude.

One evening in January, 1820, the Marquise became aware of the full gravity of a crisis, gradually brought on by force of circumstances. When a husband and wife know each other thoroughly, and their relation has long been a matter of use and wont, when the wife has learned to interpret every slightest sign, when her quick insight discerns thoughts and facts which her husband keeps from her, a chance word, or a remark so carelessly let fall in the first instance, seems, upon subsequent reflection, like the swift breaking out of light. A wife not seldom suddenly awakes upon the brink of a precipice or in the depths of the abyss; and thus it was with the Marquise. She was feeling glad to have been left to herself for some days, when the real reason of her solitude flashed upon her. Her husband, whether fickle and tired of her, or generous and full of pity for her, was hers no longer.

In the moment of that discovery she forgot herself, her sacrifices, all that she had passed through, she remembered only that she was a mother. Looking forward, she thought of her daughter's fortune, of the future welfare of the one creature through whom some gleams of happiness came to her, of her Hélène, the only possession which bound her to life.

Then Julie wished to live to save her child from a stepmother's terrible thraldom, which might crush her darling's life. Upon this new vision of threatened possibilities followed one of those paroxysms of thought at fever-heat which consume whole years of life.

Henceforward husband and wife were doomed to be separated by a whole world of thought, and all the weight of that world she must bear alone. Hitherto she had felt sure that Victor loved her, in so far as he could be said to love;

she had been the slave of pleasures which she did not share; to-day the satisfaction of knowing that she purchased his contentment with her tears was hers no longer. She was alone in the world, nothing was left to her now but a choice of evils. In the calm stillness of the night her despondency drained her of all her strength. She rose from her sofa beside the dying fire, and stood in the lamplight gazing, dry-eyed, at her child, when M. d'Aiglemont came in. He was in high spirits. Julie called to him to admire Hélène as she lay asleep, but he met his wife's enthusiasm with a commonplace:

"All children are nice at that age."

He closed the curtains about the cot after a careless kiss on the child's forehead. Then he turned his eyes on Julie, took her hand and drew her to sit beside him on the sofa, where she had been sitting with such dark thoughts surging up in her mind.

"You are looking very handsome to-night, Mme. d'Aiglemont," he exclaimed, with the gayety intolerable to the Marquise, who knew its emptiness so well.

"Where have you spent the evening?" she asked, with a pretence of complete indifference.

"At Mme. de Sérizy's."

He had taken up a fire-screen, and was looking intently at the gauze. He had not noticed the traces of tears on his wife's face. Julie shuddered. Words could not express the overflowing torrent of thoughts which must be forced down into inner depths.

"Mme. de Sérizy is giving a concert on Monday, and is dying for you to go. You have not been anywhere for some time past, and that is enough to set her longing to see you at her house. She is a good-natured woman, and very fond of you. I should be glad if you would go; I all but promised that you should—"

"I will go."

There was something so penetrating, so significant in the tones of Julie's voice, in her accent, in the glance that went

with the words, that Victor, startled out of his indifference, stared at his wife in astonishment.

That was all. Julie had guessed that it was Mme. de Sérizy who had stolen her husband's heart from her. Her brooding despair benumbed her. She appeared to be deeply interested in the fire. Victor meanwhile still played with the fire-screen. He looked bored, like a man who has enjoyed himself elsewhere, and brought home the consequent lassitude. He yawned once or twice, then he took up a candle in one hand, and with the other languidly sought his wife's neck for the usual embrace; but Julie stooped and received the good-night kiss upon her forehead; the formal, loveless grimace seemed hateful to her at that moment.

As soon as the door closed upon Victor, his wife sank into a seat. Her limbs tottered beneath her, she burst into tears. None but those who have endured the torture of some such scene can fully understand the anguish that it means, or divine the horror of the long drawn tragedy arising out of it.

Those simple, foolish words, the silence that followed between the husband and wife, the Marquis's gesture and expression, the way in which he sat before the fire, his attitude as he made that futile attempt to put a kiss on his wife's throat—all these things made up a dark hour for Julie, and the catastrophe of the drama of her sad and lonely life. In her madness she knelt down before the sofa, burying her face in it to shut out everything from sight, and prayed to Heaven, putting a new significance into the words of the evening prayer, till it became a cry from the depths of her own soul, which would have gone to her husband's heart if he had heard it.

The following week she spent in deep thought for her future, utterly overwhelmed by this new trouble. She made a study of it, trying to discover a way to regain her ascendency over the Marquis, scheming how to live long enough to watch over her daughter's happiness, yet to live true to

her own heart. Then she made up her mind. She would struggle with her rival. She would shine once more in society. She would feign the love which she could no longer feel, she would captivate her husband's fancy; and when she had lured him into her power, she would coquet with him like a capricious mistress who takes delight in tormenting a lover. This hateful strategy was the only possible way out of her troubles. In this way she would become mistress of the situation; she would prescribe her own sufferings at her good pleasure, and reduce them by enslaving her husband, and bringing him under a tyrannous yoke. She felt not the slightest remorse for the hard life which he should lead. At a bound she reached cold, calculating indifference —for her daughter's sake. She had gained a sudden insight into the treacherous, lying arts of degraded women; the wiles of coquetry, the revolting cunning which arouses such profound hatred in men at the mere suspicion of innate corruption in a woman.

Julie's feminine vanity, her interests, and a vague desire to inflict punishment, all wrought unconsciously with the mother's love within her to force her into a path where new sufferings awaited her. But her nature was too noble, her mind too fastidious, and, above all things, too open, to be the accomplice of these frauds for very long. Accustomed as she was to self-scrutiny, at the first step in vice—for vice it was—the cry of conscience must inevitably drown the clamor of the passions and of selfishness. Indeed, in a young wife whose heart is still pure, whose love has never been mated, the very sentiment of motherhood is overpowered by modesty. Modesty; is not all womanhood summed up in that? But just now Julie would not see any danger, anything wrong, in her new life.

She went to Mme. de Sérizy's concert. Her rival had expected to see a pallid, drooping woman. The Marquise wore rouge, and appeared in all the splendor of a toilet which enhanced her beauty.

Mme. de Sérizy was one of those women who claim to

exercise a sort of sway over fashions and society in Paris; she issued her decrees, saw them received in her own circle, and it seemed to her that all the world obeyed them. She aspired to epigram, she set up for an authority in matters of taste. Literature, politics, men and women, all alike were submitted to her censorship, and the lady herself appeared to defy the censorship of others. Her house was in every respect a model of good taste.

Julie triumphed over the Countess in her own salon, filled as it was with beautiful women and women of fashion. Julie's liveliness and sparkling wit gathered all the most distinguished men in the rooms about her. Her costume was faultless, for the despair of the women, who one and all envied her the fashion of her dress, and attributed the molded outline of her bodice to the genius of some unknown dressmaker, for women would rather believe in miracles worked by the science of chiffons than in the grace and perfection of the form beneath.

When Julie went to the piano to sing Desdemona's song, the men in the rooms flocked about her to hear the celebrated voice so long mute, and there was a deep silence. The Marquise saw the heads clustered thickly in the doorways, saw all eyes turned upon her, and a sharp thrill of excitement quivered through her. She looked for her husband, gave him a coquettish side-glance, and it pleased her to see that his vanity was gratified to no small degree. In the joy of triumph she sang the first part of "Al piu salice." Her audience was enraptured. Never had Malibran nor Pasta sung with expression and intonation so perfect. But at the beginning of the second part she glanced over the listening groups and saw—Arthur. He never took his eyes from her face. A quick shudder thrilled through her, and her voice faltered. Up hurried Mme. de Sérizy from her place.

"What is it, dear? Oh! poor little thing! she is in such weak health; I was so afraid when I saw her begin a piece so far beyond her strength."

The song was interrupted. Julie was vexed. She had not courage to sing any longer, and submitted to her rival's treacherous sympathy. There was a whisper among the women. The incident led to discussions; they guessed that the struggle had begun between the Marquise and Mme. de Sérizy, and their tongues did not spare the latter.

Julie's strange, perturbing presentiments were suddenly realized. Through her preoccupation with Arthur she had loved to imagine that with that gentle, refined face he must remain faithful to his first love. There were times when she felt proud that this ideal, pure, and passionate young love should have been hers; the passion of the young lover whose thoughts are all for her to whom he dedicates every moment of his life, who blushes as a woman blushes, thinks as a woman might think, forgetting ambition, fame, and fortune in devotion to his love—she need never fear a rival. All these things she had fondly and idly dreamed of Arthur; now all at once it seemed to her that her dream had come true. In the young Englishman's half-feminine face she read the same deep thoughts, the same pensive melancholy, the same passive acquiescence in a painful lot, and an endurance like her own. She saw herself in him. Trouble and sadness are the most eloquent of love's interpreters, and response is marvellously swift between two suffering creatures, for in them the powers of intuition and of assimilation of facts and ideas are wellnigh unerring and perfect. So with the violence of the shock the Marquise's eyes were opened to the whole extent of the future danger. She was only too glad to find a pretext for her nervousness in her chronic ill-health, and willingly submitted to be overwhelmed by Mme. de Sérizy's insidious compassion.

That incident of the song caused talk and discussion which differed with the various groups. Some pitied Julie's fate, and regretted that such a remarkable woman was lost to society; others fell to wondering what the cause of her ill-health and seclusion could be.

"Well, now, my dear Ronquerolles," said the Marquis, addressing Mme. de Sérizy's brother, "you used to envy me my good fortune, and you used to blame me for my infidelities. Pshaw, you would not find much to envy in my lot if, like me, you had a pretty wife so fragile that for the past two years you might not so much as kiss her hand for fear of damaging her. Do not you incumber yourself with one of these fragile ornaments, only fit to put in a glass case, so brittle and so costly that you are always obliged to be careful of them. They tell me that you are afraid of snow or wet for that fine horse of yours; how often do you ride him? That is just my own case. It is true that my wife gives me no ground for jealousy, but my marriage is a purely ornamental business; if you think that I am a married man, you are grossly mistaken. So there is some excuse for my unfaithfulness. I should dearly like to know what you gentlemen who laugh at me would do in my place. Not many men would be so considerate as I am. I am sure" (here he lowered his voice) "that Mme. d'Aiglemont suspects nothing. And then, of course, I have no right to complain at all; I am very well off. Only there is nothing more trying for a man who feels things than the sight of suffering in a poor creature to whom you are attached—"

"You must have a very sensitive nature, then," said M. de Ronquerolles, "for you are not often at home."

Laughter followed on the friendly epigram; but Arthur, who made one of the group, maintained a frigid imperturbability in his quality of an English gentleman who takes gravity for the very basis of his being. D'Aiglemont's eccentric confidence, no doubt, had kindled some kind of hope in Arthur, for he stood patiently awaiting an opportunity of a word with the Marquis. He had not to wait long.

"My Lord Marquis," he said, "I am unspeakably pained to see the state of Mme. d'Aiglemont's health. I do not think that you would talk jestingly about it if you knew that unless she adopts a certain course of treatment she

must die miserably. If I use this language to you, it is because I am in a manner justified in using it, for I am quite certain that I can save Mme. d'Aiglemont's life and restore her to health and happiness. It is odd, no doubt, that a man of my rank should be a physician, yet nevertheless chance determined that I should study medicine. I find life dull enough here," he continued, affecting a cold selfishness to gain his ends; "it makes no difference to me whether I spend my time and travel for the benefit of a suffering fellow-creature, or waste it in Paris on some nonsense or other. It is very, very seldom that a cure is completed in these complaints, for they require constant care, time, and patience, and, above all things, money. Travel is needed, and a punctilious following out of prescriptions, by no means unpleasant, and varied daily. Two *gentlemen*" (laying a stress on the word in its English sense) "can understand each other. I give you warning that if you accept my proposal you shall be a judge of my conduct at every moment. I will do nothing without consulting you, without your superintendence, and I will answer for the success of my method if you will consent to follow it. Yes, unless you wish to be Mme. d'Aiglemont's husband no longer, and that before long," he added in the Marquis's ear.

The Marquis laughed. "One thing is certain—that only an Englishman could make me such an extraordinary proposal," he said. "Permit me to leave it unaccepted and unrejected. I will think it over; and my wife must be consulted first in any case."

Julie had returned to the piano. This time she sang a song from "Semiramide," "Son regina, son guerriera," and the whole room applauded, a stifled outburst of wellbred acclamation which proved that the Faubourg Saint-Germain had been roused to enthusiasm by her singing.

The evening was over. D'Aiglemont brought his wife home, and Julie saw with uneasy satisfaction that her first attempt had been at once successful. Her husband had

been roused out of indifference by the part which she had played, and now he meant to honor her with such a passing fancy as he might bestow upon some opera nymph. It amused Julie that she, a virtuous married woman, should be treated thus. She tried to play with her power, but at the outset her kindness broke down once more, and she received the most terrible of all the lessons held in store for her by fate.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning Julie sat up, sombre and moody, beside her sleeping husband, in the room dimly lighted by the flickering lamp. Deep silence prevailed. Her agony of remorse had lasted near an hour; how bitter her tears had been none perhaps can realize save women who have known such an experience as hers. Only such natures as Julie's can feel her loathing for a calculated caress, the horror of a loveless kiss, of the heart's apostasy followed by dolorous prostitution. She despised herself; she cursed marriage. She could have longed for death; perhaps if it had not been for a cry from her child, she would have sprung from the window and dashed herself upon the pavement. M. d'Aiglemont slept on peacefully at her side; his wife's hot dropping tears did not waken him.

But next morning Julie could be gay. She made a great effort to look happy, to hide, not her melancholy, as heretofore, but an insuperable loathing. From that day she no longer regarded herself as a blameless wife. Had she not been false to herself? Why should she not play a double part in the future, and display astounding depths of cunning in deceiving her husband? In her there lay a hitherto undiscovered latent depravity, lacking only opportunity, and her marriage was the cause.

Even now she had asked herself why she should struggle with love, when, with her heart and her whole nature in revolt, she gave herself to the husband whom she loved no longer. Perhaps, who knows? some piece of fallacious reasoning, some bit of special pleading, lies at the root of

all sins, of all crimes. How shall society exist unless every individual of which it is composed will make the necessary sacrifices of inclination demanded by its laws? If you accept the benefits of civilized society, do you not by implication engage to observe the conditions, the conditions of its very existence? And yet, starving wretches, compelled to respect the laws of property, are not less to be pitied than women whose natural instincts and sensitiveness are turned to so many avenues of pain.

A few days after that scene of which the secret lay buried in the midnight couch, d'Aiglemont introduced Lord Grenville. Julie gave the guest a stiffly polite reception, which did credit to her powers of dissimulation. Resolutely she silenced her heart, veiled her eyes, steadied her voice, and so kept her future in her own hands. Then, when by these devices, this innate woman-craft, as it may be called, she had discovered the full extent of the love which she inspired, Mme. d'Aiglemont welcomed the hope of a speedy cure, and no longer opposed her husband, who pressed her to accept the young doctor's offer. Yet she declined to trust herself with Lord Grenville until, after some further study of his words and manner, she could feel certain that he had sufficient generosity to endure his pain in silence. She had absolute power over him, and she had begun to abuse that power already. Was she not a woman?

Montcontour is an old manor-house built upon the sandy cliffs above the Loire, not far from the bridge where Julie's journey was interrupted in 1814. It is a picturesque, white château, with turrets covered with fine stone carving like Mechlin lace; a chateau such as you often see in Touraine, spick and span, ivy clad, standing among its groves of mulberry trees and vineyards, with its hollow walks, its stone balustrades, and cellars mined in the rock escarpments mirrored in the Loire. The roofs of Montcontour gleam in the sun; the whole land glows in the burning heat. Traces of

the romantic charm of Spain and the south hover about the enchanting spot. The breeze brings the scent of bell flowers and golden broom, the air is soft, all about you lies a sunny land, a land which casts its dreamy spell over your soul, a land of languor and of soft desire, a fair, sweet-scented country, where pain is lulled to sleep and passion wakes. No heart is cold for long beneath its clear sky, beside its sparkling waters. One ambition dies after another, and you sink into a serene content and repose, as the sun sinks at the end of the day swathed about with purple and azure.

One warm August evening in 1821 two people were climbing the paths cut in the crags above the chateau, doubtless for the sake of the view from the heights above. The two were Julie and Lord Grenville, but this Julie seemed to be a new creature. The unmistakable color of health glowed in her face. Overflowing vitality had brought a light into her eyes, which sparkled through a moist film with that liquid brightness which gives such irresistible charm to the eyes of children. She was radiant with smiles; she felt the joy of living and all the possibilities of life. From the very way in which she lifted her little feet it was easy to see that no suffering trammelled her lightest movements; there was no heaviness nor languor in her eyes, her voice, as heretofore. Under the white silk sunshade which screened her from the hot sunlight, she looked like some young bride beneath her veil, or a maiden waiting to yield to the magical enchantments of Love.

Arthur led her with a lover's care, helping her up the pathway as if she had been a child, finding the smoothest ways, avoiding the stones for her, bidding her see glimpses of distance, or some flower beside the path, always with the unfailing goodness, the same delicate design in all that he did, the intuitive sense of this woman's well-being seemed to be innate in him, and as much, nay, perhaps more, a part of his being as the pulse of his own life.

The patient and her doctor went step for step. There

was nothing strange for them in a sympathy which seemed to have existed since the day when first they walked together. One will swayed them both; they stopped as their senses received the same impression; every word and every glance told of the same thought in either mind. They had climbed up through the vineyards, and now they turned to sit on one of the long white stones, quarried out of the caves in the hillside; but Julie stood a while gazing out over the landscape.

"What a beautiful country!" she cried. "Let us put up a tent and live here. Victor, Victor, do come up here!"

M. d'Aiglemont answered by a halloo from below. He did not, however, hurry himself, merely giving his wife a glance from time to time when the windings of the path gave him a glimpse of her. Julie breathed the air with delight. She looked up at Arthur, giving him one of those subtle glances in which a clever woman can put the whole of her thought.

"Ah, I should like to live here always," she said. "Would it be possible to tire of this beautiful valley?—What is the picturesque river called, do you know?"

"That is the Cise."

"The Cise," she repeated. "And all this country below, before us?"

"Those are the low hills above the Cher."

"And away to the right? Ah, that is Tours. Only see how fine the cathedral towers look in the distance."

She was silent, and let fall the hand which she had stretched out toward the view upon Arthur's. Both admired the wide landscape made up of so much blended beauty. Neither of them spoke. The murmuring voice of the river, the pure air, and the cloudless heaven were all in tune with their thronging thoughts and their youth and the love in their hearts.

"Oh! *mon Dieu*, how I love this country!" Julie continued, with growing and ingenuous enthusiasm. "You lived here for a long while, did you not?" she added after a pause.

A thrill ran through Lord Grenville at her words.

"It was down there," he said, in a melancholy voice, indicating as he spoke a cluster of walnut trees by the roadside, "that I, a prisoner, saw you for the first time."

"Yes, but even at that time I felt very sad. This country looked wild to me then, but now—" She broke off, and Lord Grenville did not dare to look at her.

"All this pleasure I owe to you," Julie began at last, after a long silence. "Only the living can feel the joy of life, and until now have I not been dead to it all? You have given me more than health, you have made me feel all its worth—"

Women have an inimitable talent for giving utterance to strong feeling in colorless words; a woman's eloquence lies in tone and gesture, manner and glance. Lord Grenville hid his face in his hands, for his tears filled his eyes. This was Julie's first word of thanks since they left Paris a year ago.

For a whole year he had watched over the Marquise, putting his whole self into the task. D'Aiglemont seconding him, he had taken her first to Aix, then to La Rochelle, to be near the sea. From moment to moment he had watched the changes worked in Julie's shattered constitution by his wise and simple prescriptions. He had cultivated her health as an enthusiastic gardener might cultivate a rare flower. Yet, to all appearance, the Marquise had quietly accepted Arthur's skill and care with the egoism of a spoiled Parisienne, or like a courtesan who has no idea of the cost of things, nor of the worth of a man, and judges of both by their comparative usefulness to her.

The influence of places upon us is a fact worth remarking. If melancholy comes over us by the margin of a great water, another indelible law of our nature so orders it that the mountains exercise a purifying influence upon our feelings, and among the hills passion gains in depth by all that it apparently loses in vivacity. Perhaps it was the sight of the wide country by the Loire, the height of the fair sloping hillside on which the lovers sat, that induced the calm bliss

of the moment when the whole extent of the passion that lies beneath a few insignificant-sounding words is divined for the first time with a delicious sense of happiness.

Julie had scarcely spoken the words which had moved Lord Grenville so deeply, when a caressing breeze ruffled the tree-tops and filled the air with coolness from the river; a few clouds crossed the sky, and the soft cloud-shadows brought out all the beauty of the fair land below.

Julie turned away her head, lest Arthur should see the tears which she succeeded in repressing; his emotion had spread at once to her. She dried her eyes, but she dared not raise them lest he should read the excess of joy in a glance. Her woman's instinct told her that during this hour of danger she must hide her love in the depths of her heart. Yet silence might prove equally dangerous, and Julie saw that Lord Grenville was unable to utter a word. She went on, therefore, in a gentle voice:

"You are touched by what I have said. Perhaps such a quick outburst of feeling is the way in which a gracious and kind nature like yours reverses a mistaken judgment. You must have thought me ungrateful when I was cold and reserved, or cynical and hard, all through the journey which, fortunately, is very near its end. I should not have been worthy of your care if I had been unable to appreciate it. I have forgotten nothing. Alas! I shall forget nothing, not the anxious way in which you watched over me as a mother watches over her child, nor, and above all else, the noble confidence of our life as brother and sister, the delicacy of your conduct—winning charms, against which we women are defenceless. My lord, it is out of my power to make you a return—"

At those words Julie hastily moved further away, and Lord Grenville made no attempt to detain her. She went to a rock not far away, and there sat motionless. What either felt remained a secret known to each alone; doubtless they wept in silence. The singing of the birds about them, so blithe, so overflowing with tenderness at sunset time,

could only increase the storm of passion which had driven them apart. Nature took up their story for them, and found a language for the love of which they did not dare to speak.

"And now, my lord," said Julie, and she came and stood before Arthur with a great dignity, which allowed her to take his hand in hers, "I am going to ask you to hallow and purify the life which you have given back to me. Here, we will part. I know," she added, as she saw how white his face grew, "I know that I am repaying you for your devotion by requiring of you a sacrifice even greater than any which you have hitherto made for me, sacrifices so great that they should receive some better recompense than this. . . . But it must be. . . . You must not stay in France. By laying this command upon you, do I not give you rights which shall be held sacred?" she added, holding his hand against her beating heart.

"Yes," said Arthur, and he rose.

He looked in the direction of d'Aiglemont, who appeared on the opposite side of one of the hollow walks with the child in his arms. He had scrambled up on the balustrade by the chateau that little Hélène might jump down.

"Julie, I will say not a word of my love; we understand each other too well. Deeply and carefully though I have hidden the pleasures of my heart, you have shared them all. I feel it, I know it, I see it. And now, at this moment, as I receive this delicious proof of the constant sympathy of our hearts, I must go. . . . Cunning schemes for getting rid of him have crossed my mind too often; the temptation might be irresistible if I stayed with you."

"I had the same thought," she said, a look of pained surprise in her troubled face.

Yet in her tone and involuntary shudder there was such virtue, such certainty of herself, won in many a hard-fought battle with a love that spoke in Julie's tones and involuntary gestures, that Lord Grenville stood thrilled with admiration of her. The mere shadow of a crime had been dispelled from that clear conscience. The religious sentiment enthroned on

the fair forehead could not but drive away the evil thoughts that arise unbidden, engendered by our imperfect nature, thoughts which make us aware of the grandeur and the perils of human destiny.

"And then," she said, "I should have drawn down your scorn upon me, and— I should have been saved," she added, and her eyes fell. "To be lowered in your eyes, what is that but death?"

For a moment the two heroic lovers were silent, choking down their sorrow. Good or ill, it seemed that their thoughts were loyally one, and the joys in the depths of their heart were no more experiences apart than the pain which they strove most anxiously to hide.

"I have no right to complain," she said after a while, "my misery is of my own making," and she raised her tear-filled eyes to the sky.

"Perhaps you don't remember it, but that is the place where we met each other for the first time," shouted the General from below, and he waved his hand toward the distance. "There, down yonder, near those poplars!"

The Englishman nodded abruptly by way of answer.

"So I was bound to die young and to know no happiness," Julie continued. "Yes, do not think that I live. Sorrow is just as fatal as the dreadful disease which you have cured. I do not think that I am to blame. No. My love is stronger than I am, and eternal; but all unconsciously it grew in me; and I will not be guilty through my love. Nevertheless, though I shall be faithful to my conscience as a wife, to my duties as a mother, I will be no less faithful to the instincts of my heart. Hear me," she cried in an unsteady voice, "henceforth I belong to *him* no longer."

By a gesture, dreadful to see in its undisguised loathing, she indicated her husband.

"The social code demands that I should make his existence happy," she continued. "I will obey, I will be his servant, my devotion to him shall be boundless; but from to-day I am a widow. I will neither be a prostitute in my

own eyes nor in those of the world. If I do not belong to M. d'Aiglemont, I will never belong to another. You shall have nothing, nothing save this which you have wrung from me. This is the doom which I have passed upon myself," she said, looking proudly at him. "And now, know this—if you give way to a single criminal thought, M. d'Aiglemont's widow will enter a convent in Spain or Italy. By an evil chance we have spoken of our love; perhaps that confession was bound to come; but our hearts must never vibrate again like this. To-morrow you will receive a letter from England, and we shall part, and never see each other again."

The effort had exhausted all Julie's strength. She felt her knees trembling, and a feeling of deathly cold came over her. Obeying a woman's instinct, she sat down, lest she should sink into Arthur's arms.

"*Julie!*" cried Lord Grenville.

The sharp cry rang through the air like a crack of thunder. Till then he could not speak; now, all the words which the dumb lover could not utter gathered themselves in that heartrending appeal.

"Well, what is wrong with her?" asked the General, who had hurried up at that cry, and now suddenly confronted the two.

"Nothing serious," said Julie, with that wonderful self-possession which a woman's quick-wittedness usually brings to her aid when it is most called for. "The chill, damp air under the walnut tree made me feel quite faint just now, and that must have alarmed this doctor of mine. Does he not look on me as a very nearly finished work of art? He was startled, I suppose, by the idea of seeing it destroyed." With ostentatious coolness she took Lord Grenville's arm, smiled at her husband, took a last look at the landscape, and went down the pathway, drawing her travelling companion with her.

"This certainly is the grandest view that we have seen," she said; "I shall never forget it. Just look, Victor, what

distance, what an expanse of country, and what variety in it! I have fallen in love with this landscape."

Her laughter was almost hysterical, but to her husband it sounded natural. She sprang gayly down into the hollow pathway and vanished.

"What?" she cried, when they had left M. d'Aiglemont far behind. "So soon? Is it so soon? Another moment, and we can neither of us be ourselves; we shall never be ourselves again, our life is over, in short—"

"Let us go slowly," said Lord Grenville, "the carriages are still some way off, and if we may put words into our glances, our hearts may live a little longer."

They went along the footpath by the river in the late evening light, almost in silence; such vague words as they uttered, low as the murmur of the Loire, stirred their souls to the depths.

Just as the sun sank, a last red gleam from the sky fell over them; it was like a mournful symbol of their ill-starred love.

The General, much put out because the carriage was not at the spot where they left it, followed and outstripped the pair without interrupting their converse. Lord Grenville's high-minded and delicate behavior throughout the journey had completely dispelled the Marquis's suspicions. For some time past he had left his wife in freedom, reposing confidence in the noble amateur's Punic faith. Arthur and Julie walked on together in the close and painful communion of two hearts laid waste.

So short a while ago as they climbed the cliffs at Montcontour, there had been a vague hope in either mind, an uneasy joy for which they dared not account to themselves; but now as they came along the pathway by the river, they pulled down the frail structure of imaginings, the child's card-castle, on which neither of them had dared to breathe. That hope was over.

That very evening Lord Grenville left them. His last look at Julie made it miserably plain that since the moment

when sympathy revealed the full extent of a tyrannous passion, he did well to mistrust himself.

The next morning, M. d'Aiglemont and his wife took their places in the carriage without their travelling companion, and were whirled swiftly along the road to Blois. The Marquise was constantly put in mind of the journey made in 1814, when as yet she knew nothing of love, and had been almost ready to curse it for its persistency. Countless forgotten impressions were revived. The heart has its own memory. A woman who cannot recollect the most important great events will recollect through a lifetime things which appealed to her feelings; and Julie d'Aiglemont found all the most trifling details of that journey laid up in her mind. It was pleasant to her to recall its little incidents as they occurred to her one by one; there were points in the road when she could even remember the thoughts that passed through her mind when she saw them first.

Victor had fallen violently in love with his wife since she had recovered the freshness of her youth and all her beauty, and now he pressed close to her side like a lover. Once he tried to put his arm round her, but she gently disengaged herself, finding some excuse or other for evading the harmless caress. In a little while she shrank from the close contact with Victor, the sensation of warmth communicated by their position. She tried to take the unoccupied place opposite, but Victor gallantly resigned the back seat to her. For this attention she thanked him with a sigh, whereupon he forgot himself, and the Don Juan of the garrison construed his wife's melancholy to his own advantage, so that at the end of the day she was compelled to speak with a firmness which impressed him.

"You have all but killed me, dear, once already, as you know," said she. "If I were still an inexperienced girl, I might begin to sacrifice myself afresh; but I am a mother, I have a daughter to bring up, and I owe as much to her as to you. Let us resign ourselves to a misfortune which affects us both alike. You are the less to be pitied. Have you not,

as it is, found consolations which duty and the honor of both, and (stronger still) which Nature forbids to me? Stay," she added, "you carelessly left three letters from Mme. de Sérizy in a drawer; here they are. My silence about this matter should make it plain to you that in me you have a wife who has plenty of indulgence and does not exact from you the sacrifices prescribed by the law. But I have thought enough to see that the rôles of husband and wife are quite different, and that the wife alone is predestined to misfortune. My virtue is based upon firmly fixed and definite principles. I shall live blamelessly, but let me live."

The Marquis was taken aback by a logic which women grasp with the clear insight of love, and overawed by a certain dignity natural to them at such crises. Julie's instinctive repugnance for all that jarred upon her love and the instincts of her heart is one of the fairest qualities of woman, and springs perhaps from a natural virtue which neither laws nor civilization can silence. And who shall dare to blame women? If a woman can silence the exclusive sentiment which bids her "forsake all other" for the man whom she loves, what is she but a priest who has lost his faith? If a rigid mind here and there condemns Julie for a sort of compromise between love and wifely duty, impassioned souls will lay it to her charge as a crime. To be thus blamed by both sides shows one of two things very clearly—that misery necessarily follows in the train of broken laws, or else that there are deplorable flaws in the institutions upon which society in Europe is based.

Two years went by. M. and Mme. d'Aiglemont went their separate ways, leading their life in the world, meeting each other more frequently abroad than at home, a refinement upon divorce, in which many a marriage in the great world is apt to end.

One evening, strange to say, found husband and wife in their own drawing-room. Mme. d'Aiglemont had been

dining at home with a friend, and the General, who almost invariably dined in town, had not gone out for once.

"There is a pleasant time in store for you, *Madame la Marquise*," said M. d'Aiglemont, setting his coffee cup down upon the table. He looked at the guest, Mme. de Wimphen, and half-pettishly, half-mischievously added, "I am starting off for several days' sport with the Master of the Hounds. For a whole week, at any rate, you will be a widow in good earnest; just what you wish for, I suppose. —Guillaume," he said to the servant who entered, "tell them to put the horses in."

Mme. de Wimphen was the friend to whom Julie had begun the letter upon her marriage. The glances exchanged by the two women said plainly that in her Julie had found an intimate friend, an indulgent and invaluable confidante. Mme. de Wimphen's marriage had been a very happy one. Perhaps it was her own happiness which secured her devotion to Julie's unhappy life, for under such circumstances dissimilarity of destiny is nearly always a strong bond of union.

"Is the hunting season not over yet?" asked Julie, with an indifferent glance at her husband.

"The Master of the Hounds comes when and where he pleases, madame. We are going boar-hunting in the Royal Forest."

"Take care that no accident happens to you."

"Accidents are usually unforeseen," he said, smiling.

"The carriage is ready, my Lord Marquis," said the servant.

"Madame, if I should fall a victim to the boar—" he continued, with a suppliant air.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mme. de Wimphen.

"Come, come," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, turning to her husband; smiling at her friend as if to say, "You will soon see."

Julie held up her head; but as her husband came close to her, she swerved at the last, so that his kiss fell not on her throat, but on the broad frill about it.

"You will be my witness before heaven now that I need a firman to obtain this little grace of her," said the Marquis, addressing Mme. de Wimphen. "This is how this wife of mine understands love. She has brought me to this pass, by what trickery I am at a loss to know. . . . A pleasant time to you!" and he went.

"But your poor husband is really very good-natured," cried Louisa de Wimphen, when the two women were alone together. "He loves you."

"Oh! not another syllable after that last word. The name I bear makes me shudder—"

"Yes, but Victor obeys you implicitly," said Louisa.

"His obedience is founded in part upon the great esteem which I have inspired in him. As far as outward things go, I am a model wife. I make his house pleasant to him; I shut my eyes to his intrigues; I touch not a penny of his fortune. He is free to squander the interest exactly as he pleases; I only stipulate that he shall not touch the principal. At this price I have peace. He neither explains nor attempts to explain my life. But though my husband is guided by me, that does not say that I have nothing to fear from his character. I am a bear leader who daily trembles lest the muzzle should give way at last. If Victor once took it into his head that I had forfeited my right to his esteem, what would happen next I dare not think; for he is violent, full of personal pride, and vain above all things. While his wits are not keen enough to enable him to behave discreetly at a delicate crisis when his lowest passions are involved, his character is weak, and he would very likely kill me provisionally even if he died of remorse next day. But there is no fear of that fatal good fortune."

A brief pause followed. Both women were thinking of the real cause of this state of affairs. Julie gave Lousia a glance which revealed her thoughts.

"I have been cruelly obeyed," she cried. "Yet I never forbade him to write to me. Oh! *he* has forgotten me, and he is right. If his life had been spoiled, it would have been

too tragical; one life is enough, is it not? Would you believe it, dear; I read English newspapers simply to see his name in print. But he has not yet taken his seat in the House of Lords."

"So you know English?"

"Did I not tell you?—Yes, I learned."

"Poor little one!" cried Louisa, grasping Julie's hand in hers. "How can you still live?"

"That is a secret," said the Marquise, with an involuntary gesture almost childlike in its simplicity. "Listen, I take laudanum. That duchess in London suggested the idea; you know the story, Maturin made use of it in one of his novels. My drops are very weak, but I sleep; I am only awake for seven hours in the day, and those hours I spend with my child."

Louisa gazed into the fire. The full extent of her friend's misery was opening out before her for the first time, and she dared not look into her face.

"Keep my secret, Louisa," said Julie, after a moment's silence.

Just as she spoke the footman brought in a letter for the Marquise.

"Ah!" she cried, and her face grew white.

"I need not ask from whom it comes," said Mme. de Wimphen, but the Marquise was reading the letter, and heeded nothing else.

Mme. de Wimphen, watching her friend, saw strong feeling wrought to the highest pitch, ecstasy of the most dangerous kind painted on Julie's face in swift changing white and red. At length Julie flung the sheet into the fire.

"It burns like fire," she said. "Oh! my heart beats till I cannot breathe."

She rose to her feet and walked up and down. Her eyes were blazing.

"He did not leave Paris!" she cried.

Mme. de Wimphen did not dare to interrupt the words

that followed, jerked-out sentences, measured by dreadful pauses in between. After every break the deep notes of her voice sank lower and lower. There was something awful about the last words.

"He has seen me constantly, and I have not known it.—A look, taken by stealth, every day, helps him to live.—Louisa, you do not know!—He is dying.—He wants to say good-by to me. He knows that my husband has gone away for several days. He will be here in a moment. Oh! I shall die: I am lost.—Listen, Louisa, stay with me! Two women and he will not dare— Oh! stay with me!—*I am afraid!*"

"But my husband knows that I have been dining with you; he is sure to come for me," said Mme. de Wimphen.

"Well, then, before you go I will send *him* away. I will play the executioner for us both. Oh, me! he will think that I do not love him any more— And that letter of his! Dear, I can see those words in letters of fire."

A carriage rolled in under the archway.

"Ah!" cried the Marquise, with something like joy in her voice, "he is coming openly. He makes no mystery of it."

"Lord Grenville," announced the servant.

The Marquise stood up rigid and motionless; but at the sight of Arthur's white face, so thin and haggard, how was it possible to keep up the show of severity? Lord Grenville saw that Julie was not alone, but he controlled his fierce annoyance, and looked cool and unperturbed. Yet for the two women who knew his secret, his face, his tones, the look in his eyes had something of the power attributed to the torpedo. Their faculties were benumbed by the sharp shock of contact with his horrible pain. The sound of his voice set Julie's heart beating so cruelly that she could not trust herself to speak; she was afraid that he would see the full extent of his power over her. Lord Grenville did not dare to look at Julie, and Mme. de Wimphen was left to sustain a conversation to which no one listened. Julie glanced at

her friend with touching gratefulness in her eyes to thank her for coming to her aid.

By this time the lovers had quelled emotion into silence, and could preserve the limits laid down by duty and convention. But M. de Wimphen was announced, and as he came in the two friends exchanged glances. Both felt the difficulties of this fresh complication. It was impossible to enter into explanations with M. de Wimphen, and Louisa could not think of any sufficient pretext for asking to be left.

Julie went to her, ostensibly to wrap her up in her shawl. "I will be brave," she said, in a low voice. "He came here in the face of all the world, so what have I to fear? Yet but for you, in that first moment, when I saw how changed he looked, I should have fallen at his feet."

"Well, Arthur, you have broken your promise to me," she said, in a faltering voice, when she returned. Lord Grenville did not venture to take the seat upon the sofa by her side.

"I could not resist the pleasure of hearing your voice, of being near you. The thought of it came to be a sort of madness, a delirious frenzy. I am no longer master of myself. I have taken myself to task; it is no use, I am too weak, I ought to die. But to die without seeing you, without having heard the rustle of your dress, or felt your tears. What a death!"

He moved further away from her; but in his hasty uprising a pistol fell out of his pocket. The Marquise looked down blankly at the weapon; all passion, all expression had died out of her eyes. Lord Grenville stooped for the thing, raging inwardly over an accident which seemed like a piece of love-sick strategy.

"*Arthur!*"

"Madame," he said, looking down, "I came here in utter desperation; I meant—" he broke off.

"You meant to die by your own hand here in my house!"

"Not alone," he said in a low voice.

"Not alone! My husband, perhaps—?"

"No, no," he cried in a choking voice. "Reassure yourself," he continued, "I have quite given up my deadly purpose. As soon as I came in, as soon as I saw you, I felt that I was strong enough to suffer in silence, and to die alone."

Julie sprang up, and flung herself into his arms. Through her sobbing he caught a few passionate words, "To know happiness, and then to die.—Yes, let it be so."

All Julie's story was summed up in that cry from the depths; it was the summons of nature and of love at which women without a religion surrender. With the fierce energy of unhoped-for joy, Arthur caught her up and carried her to the sofa; but in a moment she tore herself from her lover's arms, looked at him with a fixed despairing gaze, took his hand, snatched up a candle, and drew him into her room. When they stood by the cot where Hélène lay sleeping, she put the curtains softly aside, shading the candle with her hand, lest the light should dazzle the half-closed eyes beneath the transparent lids. Hélène lay smiling in her sleep, with her arms outstretched on the coverlet. Julie glanced from her child to Arthur's face. That look told him all.

"We may leave a husband, even though he loves us: a man is strong; he has consolations.—We may defy the world and its laws. But a motherless child!"—all these thoughts, and a thousand others more moving still, found language in that glance.

"We can take her with us," muttered he; "I will love her dearly."

"Mamma!" cried little Hélène, now awake. Julie burst into tears. Lord Grenville sat down and folded his arms in gloomy silence.

"Mamma!" At the sweet childish name, so many nobler feelings, so many irresistible yearnings awoke, that for a moment love was effaced by the all-powerful instinct of motherhood; the mother triumphed over the woman in

Julie, and Lord Grenville could not hold out, he was defeated by Julie's tears.

Just at that moment a door was flung noisily open. "Madame d'Aiglemont, are you hereabout?" called a voice which rang like a crack of thunder through the hearts of the two lovers. The Marquis had come home.

Before Julie could recover her presence of mind, her husband was on the way to the door of her room which opened into his. Luckily, at a sign, Lord Grenville escaped into the dressing-closet, and she hastily shut the door upon him.

"Well, my lady, here am I," said Victor, "the hunting party did not come off. I am just going to bed."

"Good-night, so am I. So go and leave me to undress."

"You are very cross to-night, Madame la Marquise."

The General returned to his room, Julie went with him to the door and shut it. Then she sprang to the dressing-closet to release Arthur. All her presence of mind returned; she bethought herself that it was quite natural that her sometime doctor should pay her a visit; she might have left him in the drawing-room while she put her little girl to bed. She was about to tell him, under her breath, to go back to the drawing-room, and had opened the door. Then she shrieked aloud. Lord Grenville's fingers had been caught and crushed in the door.

"Well, what is it?" demanded her husband.

"Oh! nothing, nothing, I have just pricked my finger with a pin."

The General's door opened at once. Julie imagined that the irruption was due to a sudden concern for her, and cursed a solicitude in which love had no part. She had barely time to close the dressing-closet, and Lord Grenville had not extricated his hand. The General did, in fact, appear, but his wife had mistaken his motives; his apprehensions were entirely on his own account.

"Can you lend me a bandanna handkerchief? That stupid fool Charles leaves me without a single one. In

the early days you used to bother me with looking after me so carefully. Ah, well, the honeymoon did not last very long for me, nor yet for my cravats. Nowadays I am given over to the secular arm, in the shape of servants who do not care one jack-straw for what I say."

"There! There is a bandanna for you. Did you go into the drawing-room?"

"No."

"Oh! you might perhaps have been in time to see Lord Grenville."

"Is he in Paris?"

"It seems so."

"Oh! I will go at once. The good doctor."

"But he will have gone by now!" exclaimed Julie.

The Marquis, standing in the middle of the room, was tying the handkerchief over his head. He looked complacently at himself in the glass.

"What has become of the servants is more than I know," he remarked. "I have rung the bell three times for Charles, and he has not answered it. And your maid is not here either. Ring for her. I should like another blanket on my bed to-night."

"Pauline is out," the Marquise said dryly.

"What, at midnight!" exclaimed the General.

"I gave her leave to go to the Opéra."

"That is funny!" returned her husband, continuing to undress. "I thought I saw her coming upstairs."

"She has come in then, of course," said Julie, with assumed impatience, and to allay any possible suspicion on her husband's part she pretended to ring the bell.

The whole history of that night has never been known, but no doubt it was as simple and as tragically commonplace as the domestic incidents that preceded it.

Next day the Marquise d'Aiglemont took to her bed, nor did she leave it for some days.

"What can have happened in your family so extraor-

dinary that every one is talking about your wife?" asked M. de Ronquerolles of M. d'Aiglemont a short time after that night of catastrophes.

"Take my advice and remain a bachelor," said d'Aiglemont. "The curtains of Hélène's cot caught fire, and gave my wife such a shock that it will be a twelvemonth before she gets over it; so the doctor says. You marry a pretty wife, and her looks fall off; you marry a girl in blooming health, and she turns into an invalid. You think she has a passionate temperament, and find her cold, or else under her apparent coldness there lurks a nature so passionate that she is the death of you, or she dishonors your name. Sometimes the meekest of them will turn out crotchety, though the crotchety ones never grow any sweeter. Sometimes the mere child, so simple and silly at first, will develop an iron will to thwart you and the ingenuity of a fiend. I am tired of marriage."

"Or of your wife?"

"That would be difficult. By the by, do you feel inclined to go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with me to attend Lord Grenville's funeral?"

"A singular way of spending time.—Is it really known how he came by his death?" added Ronquerolles.

"His man says that he spent a whole night sitting on somebody's window sill to save some woman's character, and it has been infernally cold lately."

"Such devotion would be highly creditable to one of us old stagers; but Lord Grenville was a youngster and—an Englishman. Englishmen never can do anything like anybody else."

"Pooh!" returned d'Aiglemont, "these heroic exploits all depend upon the woman in the case, and it certainly was not for one that I know that poor Arthur came by his death."

II

A HIDDEN GRIEF

BETWEEN the Seine and the little river Loing lies a wide flat country, skirted on the one side by the Forest of Fontainebleau, and marked out as to its southern limits by the towns of Moret, Montereau, and Nemours. It is a dreary country; little knolls of hills appear only at rare intervals, and a coppice here and there among the fields affords cover for game; and beyond, upon every side, stretches the endless gray or yellowish horizon peculiar to Beauce, Sologne, and Berri.

In the very centre of the plain, at equal distances from Moret and Montereau, the traveller passes the old château of Saint Lange, standing amid surroundings which lack neither dignity nor stateliness. There are magnificent avenues of elm trees, great gardens encircled by the moat, and a circumference of walls about a huge manorial pile which represents the profits of the *maltôte*, the gains of farmers-general, legalized malversation, or the vast fortunes of great houses now brought low beneath the hammer of the Civil Code.

Should any artist or dreamer of dreams chance to stray along the roads full of deep ruts, or over the heavy land which secures the place against intrusion, he will wonder how it happened that this romantic old place was set down in a savanna of corn-land, a desert of chalk, and sand, and marl, where gayety dies away, and melancholy is a natural product of the soil. The voiceless solitude, the monotonous horizon line, which weigh upon the spirits, are negative beauties, which only suit with sorrow that refuses to be comforted.

Hither, at the close of the year 1820, came a woman, still young, well known in Paris for her charm, her fair face, and her wit; and to the immense astonishment of the little vil-

lage a mile away, this woman of high rank and corresponding fortune took up her abode at Saint-Lange.

From time immemorial, farmers and laborers had seen no gentry at the chateau. The estate, considerable though it was, had been left in charge of a land-steward and the house to the old servants. Wherefore the appearance of the lady of the manor caused a kind of sensation in the district.

A group had gathered in the yard of the wretched little wineshop at the end of the village (where the road forks to Nemours and Moret) to see the carriage pass. It went by slowly, for the Marquise had come from Paris with her own horses, and those on the lookout had ample opportunity of observing a waiting-maid, who sat with her back to the horses holding a little girl, with a somewhat dreamy look, upon her knee. The child's mother lay back in the carriage; she looked like a dying woman sent out into country air by her doctors as a last resource. Village politicians were by no means pleased to see the young, delicate, downcast face; they had hoped that the new arrival at Saint-Lange would bring some life and stir into the neighborhood, and clearly any sort of stir or movement must be distasteful to the suffering invalid in the travelling carriage.

That evening, when the notables of Saint-Lange were drinking in the private room of the wineshop, the longest head among them declared that such depression could admit of but one construction—the Marquise was ruined. His lordship the Marquis was away in Spain with the Duc d'Angouleme (so they said in the papers), and beyond a doubt her ladyship had come to Saint-Lange to retrench after a run of ill-luck on the Bourse. The Marquis was one of the greatest gamblers on the face of the globe. Perhaps the estate would be cut up and sold in little lots. There would be some good strokes of business to be made in that case, and it behooved everybody to count up his cash, unearth his savings, and to see how he stood, so as to secure his share of the spoil of Saint-Lange.

So fair did this future seem that the village worthies,

dying to know whether it was founded on fact, began to think of ways of getting at the truth through the servants at the chateau. None of these, however, could throw any light on the calamity which had brought their mistress into the country at the beginning of winter, and to the old chateau of Saint-Lange of all places, when she might have taken her choice of cheerful country-houses famous for their beautiful gardens.

His worship the mayor called to pay his respects; but he did not see the lady. Then the land-steward tried with no better success.

Madame la Marquise kept her room, only leaving it, while it was set in order, for the small adjoining drawing-room, where she dined; if, indeed, to sit down to a table, to look with disgust at the dishes, and take the precise amount of nourishment required to prevent death from sheer starvation, can be called dining. The meal over, she returned at once to the old-fashioned low chair, in which she had sat since the morning, in the embrasure of the one window that lighted her room.

Her little girl she only saw for a few minutes daily, during the dismal dinner, and even for that short time she seemed scarcely able to bear the child's presence. Surely nothing but the most unheard-of anguish could have extinguished a mother's love so early.

None of the servants were suffered to come near, her own woman was the one creature whom she liked to have about her; the chateau must be perfectly quiet, the child must play at the other end of the house. The slightest sound had grown so intolerable that any human voice, even the voice of her own child, jarred upon her.

At first the whole countryside was deeply interested in these eccentricities; but time passed on, every possible hypothesis had been advanced to account for them, and the peasants and dwellers in the little country towns thought no more of the invalid lady.

So the Marquise was left to herself. She might live on,

perfectly silent, amid the silence which she herself had created; there was nothing to draw her forth from the tapestried chamber where her grandmother had died, whither she herself had come that she might die, gently, without witnesses, without importunate solicitude, without suffering from the insincere demonstrations of egoism masquerading as affection, which double the agony of death in great cities.

She was twenty-six years old. At that age, with plenty of romantic illusions still left, the mind loves to dwell on the thought of death when death seems to come as a friend. But with you, death is coy, coming up close only to go away, showing himself and hiding again, till youth has time to fall out of love with him during this dalliance. There is that uncertainty too that hangs over death's to-morrow. Youth plunges back into the world of living men, there to find the pain more pitiless than death, that does not wait to strike.

This woman who refused to live was to know the bitterness of these reprieves in the depths of her loneliness; in moral agony, which death would not come to end, she was to serve a terrible apprenticeship to the egoism which must take the bloom from her heart and break her in to the life of the world.

This harsh and sorry teaching is the usual outcome of our early sorrows. For the first, and perhaps for the last time in her life, the Marquise d'Aiglemont was in very truth suffering. And, indeed, would it not be an error to suppose that the same sentiment can be reproduced in us? Once develop the power to feel, is it not always there in the depths of our nature? The accidents of life may lull or awaken it, but there it is, of necessity modifying the self, its abiding place. Hence, every sensation should have its great day once and for all, its first day of storm, be it long or short. Hence, likewise, pain, the most abiding of our sensations, could be keenly felt only at its first irruption, its intensity diminishing with every subsequent paroxysm, either because we grow accustomed to these crises, or perhaps because a natural instinct of self-preservation asserts itself, and opposes

to the destroying force of anguish an equal but passive force of inertia.

Yet of all kinds of suffering, to which does the name of anguish belong? For the loss of parents, Nature has in a manner prepared us; physical suffering, again, is an evil which passes over us and is gone; it lays no hold upon the soul; if it persists, it ceases to be an evil, it is death. The young mother loses her firstborn, but wedded love ere long gives her a successor. This grief, too, is transient. After all, these, and many other troubles like unto them, are in some sort wounds and bruises; they do not sap the springs of vitality, and only a succession of such blows can crush in us the instinct that seeks happiness. Great pain, therefore, pain that rises to anguish, should be suffering so deadly, that past, present, and future are alike included in its grip, and no part of life is left sound and whole. Never afterward can we think the same thoughts as before. Anguish engraves itself in ineffaceable characters on mouth and brow; it passes through us, destroying or relaxing the springs that vibrate to enjoyment, leaving behind in the soul the seeds of a disgust for all things in this world.

Yet, again, to be measureless, to weigh like this upon body and soul, the trouble should befall when soul and body have just come to their full strength, and smite down a heart that beats high with life. Then it is that great scars are made. Terrible is the anguish. None, it may be, can issue from this soul-sickness without undergoing some dramatic change. Those who survive it, those who remain on earth, return to the world to wear an actor's countenance and to play an actor's part. They know the side-scenes where actors may retire to calculate chances, shed their tears, or pass their jests. Life holds no inscrutable dark places for those who have passed through this ordeal; their judgments are Rhadamanthine.

For young women of the Marquise d'Aiglemont's age, this first, this most poignant pain of all, is always referable to the same cause. A woman, especially if she is a young

woman, greatly beautiful, and by nature great, never fails to stake her whole life as instinct and sentiment and society all unite to bid her. Suppose that that life fails her, suppose that she still lives on, she cannot but endure the most cruel pangs, inasmuch as a first love is the loveliest of all. How comes it that this catastrophe has found no painter, no poet? And yet, can it be painted? Can it be sung? No; for the anguish arising from it eludes analysis and defies the colors of art. And more than this, such pain is never confessed. To console the sufferer, you must be able to divine the past which she hugs in bitterness to her soul like a remorse; it is like an avalanche in a valley, it laid all waste before it found a permanent resting-place.

The Marquise was suffering from this anguish, which will for long remain unknown, because the whole world condemns it, while sentiment cherishes it, and the conscience of a true woman justifies her in it. It is with such pain as with children steadily disowned of life, and therefore bound more closely to the mother's heart than other children more bounteously endowed. Never, perhaps, was the awful catastrophe in which the whole world without dies for us, so deadly, so complete, so cruelly aggravated by circumstance as it had been for the Marquise. The man whom she had loved was young and generous; in obedience to the laws of the world, she had refused herself to his love, and he had died to save a woman's honor, as the world calls it. To whom could she speak of her misery? Her tears would be an offence against her husband, the origin of the tragedy. By all laws written and unwritten, she was bound over to silence. A woman would have enjoyed the story; a man would have schemed for his own benefit. No; such grief as hers can only weep freely in solitude and in loneliness; she must consume her pain or be consumed by it; die or kill something within her —her conscience, it may be.

Day after day she sat gazing at the flat horizon. It lay out before her like her own life to come. There was nothing to discover, nothing to hope. The whole of it could be seen

at a glance. It was the visible presentment in the outward world of the chill sense of desolation which was gnawing restlessly at her heart. The misty mornings, the pale, bright sky, the low clouds scudding under the gray dome of heaven, fitted with the moods of her soul-sickness. Her heart did not contract, was neither more nor less seared, rather it seemed as if her youth, in its full blossom, was slowly turned to stone by an anguish intolerable because it was barren. She suffered through herself and for herself. How could it end save in self-absorption? Ugly torturing thoughts probed her conscience. Candid self-examination pronounced that she was double, there were two selves within her; a woman who felt and a woman who thought; a self that suffered and a self that would fain suffer no longer. Her mind travelled back to the joys of childish days; they had gone by, and she had never known how happy they were. Scenes crowded up in her memory as in a bright mirror glass, to demonstrate the deception of a marriage which, all that it should be in the eyes of the world, was in reality so wretched. What had the delicate pride of young womanhood done for her—the bliss foregone, the sacrifices made to the world? Everything in her expressed love, awaited love; her movements still were full of perfect grace; her smile, her charm, were hers as before; why? she asked herself. The sense of her own youth and physical loveliness no more affected her than some meaningless reiterated sound. Her very beauty had grown intolerable to her as a useless thing. She shrank aghast from the thought that through the rest of life she must remain an incomplete creature; had not the inner self lost its power of receiving impressions with that zest, that exquisite sense of freshness which is the spring of so much of life's gladness? The impressions of the future would for the most part be effaced as soon as received, and many of the thoughts which once would have moved her now would move her no more.

After the childhood of the creature dawns the childhood of the heart; but this second infancy was over, her lover had

taken it down with him into the grave. The longings of youth remained; she was young yet; but the completeness of youth was gone, and with that lost completeness the whole value and savor of life had diminished somewhat. Should she not always bear within her the seeds of sadness and mistrust, ready to grow up and rob emotion of its springtide of fervor? Conscious she must always be that nothing could give her now the happiness so longed for, that seemed so fair in her dreams. The fire from heaven that sheds abroad its light in the heart, in the dawn of love, had been quenched in tears, the first real tears which she had shed; henceforth she must always suffer, because it was no longer in her power to be what once she might have been. This is a belief which turns us in aversion and bitterness of spirit from any proffered new delight.

Julie had come to look at life from the point of view of age about to die. Young though she felt, the heavy weight of joyless days had fallen upon her, and left her broken-spirited and old before her time. With a despairing cry, she asked the world what it could give her in exchange for the love now lost, by which she had lived. She asked herself whether in that vanished love, so chaste and pure, her will had not been more criminal than her deeds, and chose to believe herself guilty; partly to affront the world, partly for her own consolation, in that she had missed the close union of body and soul, which diminishes the pain of the one who is left behind by the knowledge that once it has known and given joy to the full, and retains within itself the impress of that which is no more.

Something of the mortification of the actress cheated of her part mingled with the pain which thrilled through every fibre of her heart and brain. Her nature had been thwarted, her vanity wounded, her woman's generosity cheated of self-sacrifice. Then, when she had raised all these questions, set vibrating all the strings in those different phases of being which we distinguish as social, moral, and physical, her energies were so far exhausted and relaxed that she was power-

less to grasp a single thought amid the chase of conflicting ideas.

Sometimes as the mists fell, she would throw her window open, and would stay there, motionless, breathing in unheedingly the damp earthy scent in the air, her mind to all appearance an unintelligent blank, for the ceaseless burden of sorrow humming in her brain left her deaf to earth's harmonies and insensible to the delights of thought.

One day, toward noon, when the sun shone out for a little, her maid came in without a summons.

"This is the fourth time that M. le Curé has come to see Mme. la Marquise; to-day he is so determined about it that we did not know what to tell him."

"He has come to ask for some money for the poor, no doubt; take him twenty-five louis from me."

The woman went only to return.

"M. le Curé will not take the money, my lady; he wants to speak to you."

"Then let him come!" said Mme. d'Aiglemont, with an involuntary shrug which augured ill for the priest's reception. Evidently the lady meant to put a stop to persecution by a short and sharp method.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her mother in her early childhood; and as a natural consequence in her bringing-up, she had felt the influences of the relaxed notions which loosened the hold of religion upon France during the Revolution. Piety is a womanly virtue which women alone can really instil; and the Marquise, a child of the eighteenth century, had adopted her father's creed of philosophism, and practiced no religious observances. A priest, to her way of thinking, was a civil servant of very doubtful utility. In her present position, the teaching of religion could only poison her wounds; she had, moreover, but scanty faith in the lights of country curés, and made up her mind to put this one gently but firmly in his place, and to rid herself of him, after the manner of the rich, by bestowing a benefit.

At first sight of the curé the Marquise felt no inclination

to change her mind. She saw before her a stout, rotund little man, with a ruddy, wrinkled, elderly face, which awkwardly and unsuccessfully tried to smile. His bald, quadrant-shaped forehead, furrowed by intersecting lines, was too heavy for the rest of his face, which seemed to be dwarfed by it. A fringe of scanty white hair encircled the back of his head, and almost reached his ears. Yet the priest looked as if by nature he had a genial disposition; his thick lips, his slightly curved nose, his chin which vanished in a double fold of wrinkles—all marked him out as a man who took cheerful views of life.

At first the Marquise saw nothing but these salient characteristics, but at the first word she was struck by the sweetness of the speaker's voice. Looking at him more closely, she saw that the eyes under the grizzled eyebrows had shed tears, and his face, turned in profile, wore so sublime an impress of sorrow that the Marquise recognized the man in the curé.

"Madame la Marquise, the rich only come within our province when they are in trouble. It is easy to see that the troubles of a young, beautiful, and wealthy married woman, who has lost neither children nor relatives, are caused by wounds whose pangs religion alone can soothe. Your soul is in danger, madame. I am not speaking now of the hereafter which awaits us. No, I am not in the confessional. But it is my duty, is it not, to open your eyes to your future life here on earth? You will pardon an old man, will you not, for importunity which has your own happiness for its object?"

"There is no more happiness for me, monsieur. I shall soon be, as you say, in your province; but it will be forever."

"Nay, madame. You will not die of this pain which lies heavy upon you, and can be read in your face. If you had been destined to die of it, you would not be here at Saint-Lange. A definite regret is not so deadly as hope deferred. I have known others pass through more intolerable and more awful anguish, and yet they live."

The Marquise looked incredulous.

"Madame, I know a man whose affliction was so sore that your trouble would seem to you to be light compared with his."

Perhaps the long solitary hours had begun to hang heavily; perhaps in the recesses of the Marquise's mind lay the thought that here was a friendly heart to whom she might be able to pour out her troubles. However it was, she gave the curé a questioning glance which could not be mistaken.

"Madame," he continued, "the man of whom I tell you had but three children left of a once large family circle. He lost his parents, his daughter, and his wife, whom he dearly loved. He was left alone at last on the little farm where he had lived so happily for so long. His three sons were in the army, and each of the lads had risen in proportion to his time of service. During the Hundred Days, the oldest went into the Guard with a colonel's commission; the second was a major in the artillery; the youngest a major in a regiment of dragoons. Madame, those three boys loved their father as much as he loved them. If you but knew how careless young fellows grow of home ties when they are carried away by the current of their own lives, you would realize from this one little thing how warmly they loved the lonely old father, who only lived in and for them—never a week passed without a letter from one of the boys. But then he on his side had never been weakly indulgent, to lessen their respect for him; nor unjustly severe, to thwart their affection; nor apt to grudge sacrifices, the thing that estranges children's hearts. He had been more than a father; he had been a brother to them, and their friend.

"At last he went to Paris to bid them good-by before they set out for Belgium; he wished to see that they had good horses and all that they needed. And so they went, and the father returned to his home again. Then the war began. He had letters from Fleurus, and again from Ligny. All went well. Then came the battle of Waterloo, and you know the rest. France was plunged into mourning; every

family waited in intense anxiety for news. You may imagine, madame, how the old man waited for tidings, in anxiety that knew no peace nor rest. He used to read the gazettes; he went to the coach office every day. One evening he was told that the colonel's servant had come. The man was riding his master's horse—what need was there to ask any questions?—the colonel was dead, cut in two by a shell. Before the evening was out the youngest son's servant arrived—the youngest had died on the eve of the battle. At midnight came a gunner with tidings of the death of the last; upon whom, in those few hours, the poor father had centred all his life. Madame, they all had fallen."

After a pause the good man controlled his feelings, and added gently:

"And their father is still living, madame. He realized that if God had left him on earth, he was bound to live on and suffer on earth; but he took refuge in the sanctuary. What could he be?"

The Marquise looked up and saw the curé's face, grown sublime in its sorrow and resignation, and waited for him to speak. When the words came, tears broke from her.

"A priest, madame; consecrated by his own tears previously shed at the foot of the altar."

Silence prevailed for a little. The Marquise and the curé looked out at the foggy landscape, as if they could see the figures of those who were no more.

"Not a priest in a city, but a simple country curé," added he.

"At Saint-Lange," she said, drying her eyes.

"Yes, madame."

Never had the majesty of grief seemed so great to Julie. The two words sank straight into her heart with the weight of an infinite sorrow. The gentle, sonorous tones troubled her heart. Ah! that full, deep voice, charged with plangent vibration, was the voice of one who had suffered indeed.

"And if I do not die, monsieur, what will become of me?" The Marquise spoke almost reverently.

"Have you not a child, madame?"

"Yes," she said stiffly.

The curé gave her such a glance as a doctor gives a patient whose life is in danger. Then he determined to do all that in him lay to combat the evil spirit into whose clutches she had fallen.

"We must live on with our sorrows—you see it yourself, madame, and religion alone offers us real consolation. Will you permit me to come again?—to speak to you as a man who can sympathize with every trouble, a man about whom there is nothing very alarming, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, come back again. Thank you for your thought of me."

"Very well, madame; then I shall return very shortly."

This visit relaxed the tension of soul, as it were; the heavy strain of grief and loneliness had been almost too much for the Marquise's strength. The priest's visit had left a soothing balm in her heart, his words thrilled through her with healing influence. She began to feel something of a prisoner's satisfaction, when, after he has had time to feel his utter loneliness and the weight of his chains, he hears a neighbor knocking on the wall, and welcomes the sound which brings a sense of human fellowship. Here was an unhoped-for confidant. But this feeling did not last for long. Soon she sank back into the old bitterness of spirit, saying to herself, as the prisoner might say, that a companion in misfortune could neither lighten her own bondage nor her future.

In the first visit the curé had feared to alarm the susceptibilities of self-absorbed grief, in a second interview he hoped to make some progress toward religion. He came back again two days later, and from the Marquise's welcome it was plain that she had looked forward to the visit.

"Well, Mme. la Marquise, have you given a little thought to the great mass of human suffering? Have you raised your eyes above our earth and seen the immensity of the universe?—the worlds beyond worlds which crush our vanity

into insignificance, and with our vanity reduce our sorrows?"

"No, monsieur," she said; "I cannot rise to such heights, our social laws lie too heavily upon me, and rend my heart with a too poignant anguish. And laws perhaps are less cruel than the usages of the world. Ah! the world!"

"Madame, we must obey both. Law is the doctrine, and custom the practice of society."

"Obey society?" cried the Marquise, with an involuntary shudder. "Eh! monsieur, it is the source of all our woes. God laid down no law to make us miserable; but mankind, uniting together in social life, have perverted God's work. Civilization deals harder measure to us women than nature does. Nature imposes upon us physical suffering which you have not alleviated; civilization has developed in us thoughts and feelings which you cheat continually. Nature exterminates the weak; you condemn them to live, and by so doing consign them to a life of misery. The whole weight of the burden of marriage, an institution on which society is based, falls upon us; for the man liberty, duties for the woman. We must give up our whole lives to you, you are only bound to give us a few moments of yours. A man, in fact, makes a choice, while we blindly submit. Oh, monsieur, to you I can speak freely. Marriage, in these days, seems to me to be legalized prostitution. This is the cause of my wretchedness. But among so many miserable creatures so unhappily yoked, I alone am bound to be silent, I alone am to blame for my misery. My marriage was my own doing."

She stopped short, and bitter tears fell in the silence.

"In the depths of my wretchedness, in the midst of this sea of distress," she went on, "I found some sands on which to set foot and suffer at leisure. A great tempest swept everything away. And here am I, helpless and alone, too weak to cope with storms."

"We are never weak while God is with us," said the priest. "And if your cravings for affection cannot be satisfied here on earth, have you no duties to perform?"

"Duties continually!" she exclaimed, with something of impatience in her tone. "But where for me are the sentiments which give us strength to perform them? Nothing from nothing, nothing for nothing—this, monsieur, is one of the most inexorable laws of nature, physical or spiritual. Would you have these trees break into leaf without the sap which swells the buds? It is the same with our human nature; and in me the sap is dried up at its source."

"I am not going to speak to you of religious sentiments of which resignation is born," said the curé, "but of motherhood, madame, surely—"

"Stop, monsieur!" said the Marquise, "with you I will be sincere. Alas! in future I can be sincere with no one; I am condemned to falsehood. The world requires continual grimaces, and we are bidden to obey its conventions if we would escape reproach. There are two kinds of motherhood, monsieur; once I knew nothing of such distinctions, but I know them now. Only half of me has become a mother; it were better for me if I had not been a mother at all. Hélène is not *his* child! Oh! do not start. At Saint-Lange there are volcanic depths whence come lurid gleams of light and earthquake shocks to shake the fragile edifices of laws not based on nature. I have borne a child, that is enough, I am a mother in the eye of the law. But you, monsieur, with your delicately compassionate soul, can perhaps understand this cry from an unhappy woman who has suffered no lying illusions to enter her heart. God will judge me, but surely I have only obeyed His laws by giving way to the affections which He Himself set in me, and this I have learned from my own soul.—What is a child, monsieur, but the image of two beings, the fruit of two sentiments spontaneously blended? Unless it is owned by every fibre of the body, as by every chord of tenderness in the heart; unless it recalls the bliss of love, the hours, the places where two creatures were happy, their words that overflowed with the music of humanity, and their sweet imaginings, that child is an incomplete creation. Yes, those two

should find the poetic dreams of their intimate double life realized in their child as in an exquisite miniature; it should be for them a never-failing spring of emotion, implying their whole past and their whole future.

"My poor little Hélène is her father's child, the offspring of duty and of chance. In me she finds nothing but the affection of instinct, the woman's natural compassion for the child of her womb. Socially speaking, I am above reproach. Have I not sacrificed my life and my happiness to my child? Her cries go to my heart; if she were to fall into the water, I should spring to save her, but she is not in my heart.

"Ah! love set me dreaming of a motherhood far greater and more complete. In a vanished dream I held in my arms a child conceived in desire before it was begotten, the exquisite flower of life that blossoms in the soul before it sees the light of day. I am Hélène's mother only in the sense that I brought her forth. When she needs me no longer, there will be an end of my motherhood; with the extinction of the cause, the effects will cease. If it is a woman's adorable prerogative that her motherhood may last through her child's life, surely that divine persistence of sentiment is due to the far-reaching glory of the conception of the soul? Unless a child has lain wrapped about from life's first beginnings by the mother's soul, the instinct of motherhood dies in her as in the animals. This is true; I feel that it is true. As my poor little one grows older, my heart closes. My sacrifices have driven us apart. And yet I know, monsieur, that to another child my heart would have gone out in inexhaustible love; for that other I should not have known what sacrifice meant, all had been delight. In this, monsieur, my instincts are stronger than reason, stronger than religion or all else in me. Does the woman who is neither wife nor mother sin in wishing to die when, for her misfortune, she has caught a glimpse of the infinite beauty of love, the limitless joy of motherhood? What can become of her? *I* can tell you what she feels. I cannot put that memory from

me so resolutely but that a hundred times, night and day, visions of a happiness, greater it may be than the reality, rise before me, followed by a shudder which shakes brain and heart and body. Before these cruel visions, my feelings and thoughts grow colorless, and I ask myself, "What would my life have been *if*—?"

She hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"There you see the depths of my heart!" she continued. "For *his* child I could have acquiesced in any lot however dreadful. He who died, bearing the burden of the sins of the world, will forgive this thought of which I am dying; but the world, I know, is merciless. In its ears my words are blasphemies; I am outraging all its codes. Oh! that I could wage war against this world and break down and refashion its laws and traditions! Has it not turned all my thoughts, and feelings, and longings, and hopes, and every fibre in me into so many sources of pain? Spoiled my future, present and past? For me the daylight is full of gloom, my thoughts pierce me like a sword, my child is and is not.

"Oh, when Hélène speaks to me I wish that her voice were different, when she looks into my face I wish that she had other eyes. She constantly keeps me in mind of all that should have been and is not. I cannot bear to have her near me. I smile at her, I try to make up to her for the real affection of which she is defrauded. I am wretched, monsieur, too wretched to live. And I am supposed to be a pattern wife. And I have committed no sins. And I am respected! I have fought down forbidden love which sprang up at unawares within me; but if I have kept the letter of the law, have I kept it in my heart? There has never been but one here," she said, laying her right hand on her breast, "one and no other; and my child feels it. Certain looks and tones and gestures mold a child's nature, and my poor little one feels no thrill in the arm I put about her, no tremor comes into my voice, no softness into my eyes when I speak to her or take her up. She looks at me,

and I cannot endure the reproach in her eyes. There are times when I shudder to think that some day she may be my judge and condemn her mother unheard. Heaven grant that hate may not grow up between us! Ah! God in heaven, rather let the tomb open for me, rather let me end my days here at Saint-Lange!—I want to go back to the world where I shall find my other soul and become wholly a mother. Ah! forgive me, sir, I am mad. Those words were choking me; now they are spoken. Ah! you are weeping too! You will not despise me—"

She heard the child come in from a walk. "Hélène, Hélène, my child, come here!" she called. The words sounded like a cry of despair.

The little girl ran in, laughing and calling to her mother to see a butterfly which she had caught; but at the sight of that mother's tears she grew quiet of a sudden, and went up close, and received a kiss on her forehead.

"She will be very beautiful some day," said the priest.

"She is her father's child," said the Marquise, kissing the little one with eager warmth, as if she meant to pay a debt of affection or to extinguish some feeling of remorse.

"How hot you are, mamma!"

"There, go away, my angel," said the Marquise.

The child went. She did not seem at all sorry to go; she did not look back; glad perhaps to escape from a sad face, and instinctively comprehending already an antagonism of feeling in its expression. A mother's love finds language in smiles; they are a part of the divine right of motherhood. The Marquise could not smile. She flushed red as she felt the curé's eyes. She had hoped to act a mother's part before him, but neither she nor her child could deceive him. And, indeed, when a woman loves sincerely, in the kiss she gives there is a divine honey; it is as if a soul were breathed forth in the caress, a subtle flame of fire which brings warmth to the heart; the kiss that lacks this delicious unction is meagre and formal. The priest had felt the difference. He

could fathom the depths that lie between the motherhood of the flesh and the motherhood of the heart. He gave the Marquise a keen, scrutinizing glance, then he said:

"You are right, madame; it would be better for you if you were dead—"

"Ah!" she cried, "then you know all my misery; I see you do if, Christian priest as you are, you can guess my determination to die and sanction it. Yes, I meant to die, but I have lacked the courage. The spirit was strong, but the flesh was weak, and when my hand did not tremble, the spirit within me wavered.

"I do not know the reason of these inner struggles, and alternations. I am very pitiably a woman no doubt, weak in my will, strong only to love. Oh, I despise myself. At night, when all my household was asleep, I would go out bravely as far as the lake; but when I stood on the brink, my cowardice shrank from self-destruction. To you I will confess my weakness. When I lay in my bed, again, shame would come over me, and courage would come back. Once I took a dose of laudanum; I was ill, but I did not die. I thought I had emptied the phial, but I had only taken half the dose."

"You are lost, madame," the curé said gravely, with tears in his voice. "You will go back into the world, and you will deceive the world. You will seek and find a compensation (as you imagine it to be) for your woes; then will come a day of reckoning for your pleasures—"

"Do you think," she cried, "that *I* shall bestow the last, the most precious treasures of my heart upon the first base impostor who can play the comedy of passion? That I would pollute my life for a moment of doubtful pleasure? No; the flame which shall consume my soul shall be love, and nothing but love. All men, monsieur, have the senses of their sex, but not all have the man's soul which satisfies all the requirements of our nature, drawing out the melodious harmony which never breaks forth save in response to the pressure of feeling. Such a soul is not found twice in

our lifetime. The future that lies before me is hideous; I know it. A woman is nothing without love; beauty is nothing without pleasure. And even if happiness were offered to me a second time, would not the world frown upon it? I owe my daughter an honored mother. Oh! I am condemned to live in an iron circle, from which there is but one shameful way of escape. The round of family duties, a thankless and irksome task, is in store for me. I shall curse life; but my child shall have at least a fair semblance of a mother. I will give her treasures of virtue for the treasures of love of which I defraud her.

"I have not even the mother's desire to live to enjoy her child's happiness. I have no belief in happiness. What will Hélène's fate be? My own, beyond doubt. How can a mother insure that the man to whom she gives her daughter will be the husband of her heart? You pour scorn on the miserable creatures who sell themselves for a few coins to any passer-by, though want and hunger absolve the brief union; while another union, horrible for quite other reasons, is tolerated, nay, encouraged, by society, and a young and innocent girl is married to a man whom she has only met occasionally during the previous three months. She is sold for her whole lifetime. It is true that the price is high! If you allow her no compensation for her sorrows, you might at least respect her; but no, the most virtuous of women cannot escape calumny. This is our fate in its double aspect. Open prostitution and shame; secret prostitution and unhappiness. As for the poor, portionless girls, they may die or go mad, without a soul to pity them. Beauty and virtue are not marketable in the bazaar where souls and bodies are bought and sold—in the den of selfishness which you call society. Why not disinherit daughters? Then, at least, you might fulfil one of the laws of nature, and, guided by your own inclinations, choose your companions."

"Madame, from your talk it is clear to me that neither the spirit of family nor the sense of religion appeals to you. Why should you hesitate between the claims of the social

selfishness which irritates you, and the purely personal selfishness which craves satisfactions—"

"The family, monsieur—does such a thing exist? I decline to recognize as a family a knot of individuals bidden by society to divide the property after the death of father and mother, and to go their separate ways. A family means a temporary association of persons brought together by no will of their own, dissolved at once by death. Our laws have broken up homes and estates, and the old family tradition handed down from generation to generation. I see nothing but wreck and ruin about me."

"Madame, you will only return to God when His hand has been heavy upon you, and I pray that you have time enough given to you in which to make your peace with Him. Instead of looking to heaven for comfort, you are fixing your eyes on earth. Philosophism and personal interest have invaded your heart; like the children of the sceptical eighteenth century, you are deaf to the voice of religion. The pleasures of this life bring nothing but misery. You are about to make an exchange of sorrows, that is all."

She smiled bitterly.

"I will falsify your predictions," she said. "I shall be faithful to him who died for me."

"Sorrow," he answered, "is not likely to live long save in souls disciplined by religion," and he lowered his eyes respectfully lest the Marquise should read his doubts in them. The energy of her outburst had grieved him. He had seen the self that lurked beneath so many forms, and despaired of softening a heart which affliction seemed to sear. The divine Sower's seed could not take root in such a soil, and His gentle voice was drowned by the clamorous outcry of self-pity. Yet the good man returned again and again with an apostle's earnest persistence, brought back by a hope of leading so noble and proud a soul to God; until the day when he made the discovery that the Marquise only cared to talk with him because it was sweet to speak of him

who was no more. He would not lower his ministry by condoning her passion, and confined the conversation more and more to generalities and commonplaces.

Spring came, and with the spring the Marquise found distraction from her deep melancholy. She busied herself for lack of other occupation with her estate, making improvements for amusement.

In October she left the old chateau. In the life of leisure at Saint-Lange she had recovered from her grief and grown fair and fresh. Her grief had been violent at first in its course, as the quoit hurled forth with all the player's strength, and like the quoit after many oscillations, each feebler than the last, it had slackened into melancholy. Melancholy is made up of a succession of such oscillations, the first touching upon despair, the last on the border between pain and pleasure; in youth, it is the twilight of dawn; in age, the dusk of night.

As the Marquise drove through the village in her travelling carriage, she met the curé on his way back from the church. She bowed in response to his farewell greeting, but it was with lowered eyes and averted face. She did not wish to see him again. The village curé had judged this poor Diana of Ephesus only too well.

III

AT THIRTY YEARS

MADAME FIRMIANI was giving a ball. M. Charles de Vandenesse, a young man of great promise, the bearer of one of those historic names which, in spite of the efforts of legislation, are always associated with the glory of France, had received letters of introduction to some of the great lady's friends in Naples, and had come to thank the hostess and to take his leave.

Vandenesse had already acquitted himself creditably on

several diplomatic missions; and now that he had received an appointment as attaché to a plenipotentiary at the Congress of Laybach, he wished to take advantage of the opportunity to make some study of Italy on the way. This ball was a sort of farewell to Paris and its amusements and its rapid whirl of life, to the great eddying intellectual centre and maelstrom of pleasure; and a pleasant thing it is to be borne along by the current of this sufficiently slandered great city of Paris. Yet Charles de Vandenesse had little to regret, accustomed as he had been for the past three years to salute European capitals and turn his back upon them at the capricious bidding of a diplomatist's destiny. Women no longer made any impression upon him; perhaps he thought that a real passion would play too large a part in a diplomatist's life; or perhaps that the paltry amusements of frivolity were too empty for a man of strong character. We all of us have huge claims to strength of character. There is no man in France, be he never so ordinary a member of the rank and file of humanity, that will waive pretensions to something beyond mere cleverness.

Charles, young though he was—he was scarcely turned thirty—looked at life with a philosophic mind, concerning himself with theories and means and ends, while other men of his age were thinking of pleasure, sentiments, and the like illusions. He forced back into some inner depth the generosity and enthusiasms of youth, and by nature he was generous. He tried hard to be cool and calculating, to coin the fund of wealth which chanced to be in his nature into gracious manners, and courtesy, and attractive arts; 'tis the proper task of an ambitious man, to play a sorry part to gain "a good position," as we call it in modern days.

He had been dancing, and now he gave a farewell glance over the rooms, to carry away a distinct impression of the ball, moved, doubtless, to some extent by the feeling which prompts a theatre-goer to stay in his box to see the final tableau before the curtain falls. But M. de Vandenesse had another reason for his survey. He gazed curiously at the

scene before him, so French in character and in movement, seeking to carry away a picture of the light and laughter and the faces at this Parisian fête, to compare with novel faces and picturesque surroundings awaiting him at Naples, where he meant to spend a few days before presenting himself at his post. He seemed to be drawing the comparison now between this France so variable, changing even as you study her, with the manners and aspects of that other land known to him as yet only by contradictory hearsay tales or books of travel, for the most part unsatisfactory. Thoughts of a somewhat poetical cast, albeit hackneyed and trite to our modern ideas, crossed his brain, in response to some longing of which, perhaps, he himself was hardly conscious, a desire in the depths of a heart fastidious rather than jaded, vacant rather than seared.

"These are the wealthiest and most fashionable women and the greatest ladies in Paris," he said to himself. "These are the great men of the day, great orators and men of letters, great names and titles; artists and men in power; and yet in it all it seems to me as if there were nothing but petty intrigues and still-born loves, meaningless smiles and causeless scorn, eyes lighted by no flame within, brain-power in abundance running aimlessly to waste. All those pink-and-white faces are here not so much for enjoyment, as to escape from dulness. None of the emotion is genuine. If you ask for nothing but court feathers properly adjusted, fresh gauzes and pretty toilets and fragile, fair women, if you desire simply to skim the surface of life, here is your world for you. Be content with meaningless phrases and fascinating simpers, and do not ask for real feeling. For my own part, I abhor the stale intrigues which end in sub-prefectures and receiver-generals' places and marriages; or, if love comes into the question, in stealthy compromises, so ashamed are we of the mere semblance of passion. Not a single one of all these eloquent faces tells you of a soul, a soul wholly absorbed by one idea as by remorse. Regrets and misfortune go about shamefacedly clad in jests. There is not one woman

here whose resistance I should care to overcome, not one who could drag you down to the pit. Where will you find energy in Paris? A poniard here is a curious toy to hang from a gilt nail, in a picturesque sheath to match. The women, the brains, and hearts of Paris are all on a par. There is no passion left, because we have no individuality. High birth and intellect and fortune are all reduced to one level; we all have taken to the uniform black coat by way of mourning for a dead France. There is no love between equals. Between two lovers there should be differences to efface, wide gulfs to fill. The charm of love fled from us in 1789. Our dulness and our humdrum lives are the outcome of the political system. Italy at any rate is the land of sharp contrasts. Woman there is a malevolent animal, a dangerous unreasoning siren, guided only by her tastes and appetites, a creature no more to be trusted than a tiger—"

Mme. Firmiani here came up to interrupt this soliloquy made up of vague, conflicting, and fragmentary thoughts which cannot be reproduced in words. The whole charm of such musing lies in its vagueness—what is it but a sort of mental haze?

"I want to introduce you to some one who has the greatest wish to make your acquaintance, after all that she has heard of you," said the lady, taking his arm.

She brought him into the next room, and, with such a smile and glance as a Parisienne alone can give, she indicated a woman sitting by the hearth.

"Who is she?" the Comte de Vandenesse asked quickly.

"You have heard her name more than once coupled with praise or blame. She is a woman who lives in seclusion—a perfect mystery."

"Oh! if ever you have been merciful in your life, for pity's sake tell me her name."

"She is the Marquise d'Aiglemont."

"I will take lessons from her; she has managed to make a peer of France of that eminently ordinary person her husband, and a dullard into a power in the land. But, pray tell

me this, did Lord Grenville die for her sake, do you think, as some women say?"

"Possibly. Since that adventure, real or imaginary, she is very much changed, poor thing! She has not gone into society since. Four years of constancy—that is something in Paris. If she is here to-night—" Here Mme. Firmiani broke off, adding with a mysterious expression, "I am forgetting that I must say nothing. Go and talk with her."

For a moment Charles stood motionless, leaning lightly against the frame of the doorway, wholly absorbed in his scrutiny of a woman who had become famous, no one exactly knew how or why. Such curious anomalies are frequent enough in the world. Mme. d'Aiglemont's reputation was certainly no more extraordinary than plenty of other great reputations. There are men who are always in travail of some great work which never sees the light, statisticians held to be profound on the score of calculations which they take very good care not to publish, politicians who live on a newspaper article, men of letters and artists whose performances are never given to the world, men of science who pass current among those who know nothing of science, much as Sganarelle is a Latinist for those who know no Latin; there are the men who are allowed by general consent to possess a peculiar capacity for some one thing, be it for the direction of arts, or for the conduct of an important mission. The admirable phrase, "A man with a special subject," might have been invented on purpose for these acephalous species in the domain of literature and politics.

Charles gazed longer than he intended. He was vexed with himself for feeling so strongly interested; it is true, however, that the lady's appearance was a refutation of the young man's ballroom generalizations.

The Marquise had reached her thirtieth year. She was beautiful in spite of her fragile form and extremely delicate look. Her greatest charm lay in her still face, revealing unfathomed depths of soul. Some haunting, ever-present thought veiled, as it were, the full brilliance of eyes which

told of a fevered life and boundless resignation. So seldom did she raise the eyelids soberly downcast, and so listless were her glances, that it almost seemed as if the fire in her eyes were reserved for some occult contemplation. Any man of genius and feeling must have felt strangely attracted by her gentleness and silence. If the mind sought to explain the mysterious problem of a constant inward turning from the present to the past, the soul was no less interested in initiating itself into the secrets of a heart proud in some sort of its anguish. Everything about her, moreover, was in keeping with these thoughts which she inspired. Like almost all women who have very long hair, she was very pale and perfectly white. The marvellous fineness of her skin (that almost unerring sign) indicated a quick sensibility which could be seen yet more unmistakably in her features; there was the same minute and wonderful delicacy of finish in them that the Chinese artist gives to his fantastic figures. Perhaps her neck was rather too long, but such necks belong to the most graceful type, and suggest vague affinities between a woman's head and the magnetic curves of the serpent. Leave not a single one of the thousand signs and tokens by which the most inscrutable character betrays itself to an observer of human nature, he has but to watch carefully the little movements of a woman's head, the ever-varying expressive turns and curves of her neck and throat, to read her nature.

Mme. d'Aiglemont's dress harmonized with the haunting thought that informed the whole woman. Her hair was gathered up into a tall coronet of broad plaits, without ornament of any kind; she seemed to have bidden farewell forever to elaborate toilets. Nor were any of the small arts of coquetry which spoil so many women to be detected in her. Perhaps her bodice, modest though it was, did not altogether conceal the dainty grace of her figure, perhaps, too, her gown looked rich from the extreme distinction of its fashion; and if it is permissible to look for expression in the arrangement of stuffs, surely those numerous straight folds

invested her with a great dignity. There may have been some lingering trace of the indelible feminine foible in the minute care bestowed upon her hand and foot; yet, if she allowed them to be seen with some pleasure, it would have tasked the utmost malice of a rival to discover any affectation in her gestures, so natural did they seem, so much a part of old childish habit, that her careless grace absolved this vestige of vanity.

All these little characteristics, the nameless trifles which combine to make up the sum of a woman's prettiness or ugliness, her charm or lack of charm, can only be indicated, when, as with Mme. d'Aiglemont, a personality dominates and gives coherence to the details, informing them, blending them all in an exquisite whole. Her manner was perfectly in accord with her style of beauty and her dress. Only to certain women at a certain age is it given to put language into their attitude. Is it joy or is it sorrow that teaches a woman of thirty the secret of that eloquence of carriage, so that she must always remain an enigma which each interprets by the aid of his hopes, desires, or theories?

The way in which the Marquise leaned both elbows on the arm of her chair, the toying of her interclasped fingers, the curve of her throat, the indolent lines of her languid but lissome body as she lay back in graceful exhaustion, as it were; her indolent limbs, her unstudied pose, the utter lassitude of her movements—all suggested that this was a woman for whom life had lost its interest, a woman who had known the joys of love only in dreams, a woman bowed down by the burden of memories of the past, a woman who had long since despaired of the future and despaired of herself, an unoccupied woman who took the emptiness of her own life for the nothingness of life.

Charles de Vandenesse saw and admired the beautiful picture before him, as a kind of artistic success beyond an ordinary woman's powers of attainment. He was acquainted with d'Aiglemont; and now, at the first sight of d'Aiglemont's wife, the young diplomatist saw at a glance a dispro-

portionate marriage, an incompatibility (to use the legal jargon) so great that it was impossible that the Marquise should love her husband. And yet—the Marquise d'Aiglemont's life was above reproach, and for any observer the mystery about her was the more interesting on this account. The first impulse of surprise over, Vandenesse cast about for the best way of approaching Mme. d'Aiglemont. He would try a commonplace piece of diplomacy, he thought; he would disconcert her by a piece of clumsiness and see how she would receive it.

"Madame," he said, seating himself near her, "through a fortunate indiscretion I have learned that, for some reason unknown to me, I have had the good fortune to attract your notice. I owe you the more thanks because I have never been so honored before. At the same time, you are responsible for one of my faults, for I mean never to be modest again—"

"You will make a mistake, monsieur," she laughed; "vanity should be left to those who have nothing else to recommend them."

The conversation thus opened ranged at large, in the usual way, over a multitude of topics—art and literature, politics, men and things—till insensibly they fell to talking of the eternal theme in France and all the world over—love, sentiment, and women.

"We are bond-slaves."

"You are queens."

This was the gist and substance of all the more or less ingenious discourse between Charles and the Marquise, as of all such discourses—past, present, and to come. Allow a certain space of time, and the two formulas shall begin to mean "Love me," and "I will love you."

"Madame," Charles de Vandenesse exclaimed under his breath, "you have made me bitterly regret that I am leaving Paris. In Italy I certainly shall not pass hours in intellectual enjoyment such as this has been."

"Perhaps, monsieur, you will find happiness, and happi-

ness is worth more than all the brilliant things, true and false, that are said every evening in Paris."

Before Charles took leave, he asked permission to pay a farewell call on the Marquise d'Aiglemont, and very lucky did he feel himself when the form of words in which he expressed himself for once was used in all sincerity; and that night, and all day long on the morrow, he could not put the thought of the Marquise out of his mind.

At times he wondered why she had singled him out, what she had meant when she asked him to come to see her, and thought supplied an inexhaustible commentary. Again it seemed to him that he had discovered the motives of her curiosity, and he grew intoxicated with hope or frigidly sober with each new construction put upon that piece of commonplace civility. Sometimes it meant everything, sometimes nothing. He made up his mind at last that he would not yield to this inclination, and—went to call on Mme. d'Aiglemont.

There are thoughts which determine our conduct, while we do not so much as suspect their existence. If at first sight this assertion appears to be less a truth than a paradox, let any candid inquirer look into his own life and he shall find abundant confirmation therein. Charles went to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and so obeyed one of these latent, pre-existent germs of thought, of which our experience and our intellectual gains and achievements are but later and tangible developments.

For a young man a woman of thirty has irresistible attractions. There is nothing more natural, nothing better established, no human tie of stouter tissue than the heart-deep attachment between such a woman as the Marquise d'Aiglemont and such a man as Charles de Vandenesse. You can see examples of it every day in the world. A girl, as a matter of fact, has too many young illusions, she is too inexperienced, the instinct of sex counts for too much in her love for a young man to feel flattered by it. A woman of thirty knows all that is involved in the self-

surrender to be made. Among the impulses of the first, put curiosity and other motives than love; the second acts with integrity of sentiment. The first yields; the second makes deliberate choice. Is not that choice in itself an immense flattery? A woman armed with experience, forewarned by knowledge, almost always dearly bought, seems to give more than herself; while the inexperienced and credulous girl, unable to draw comparisons for lack of knowledge, can appreciate nothing at its just worth. She accepts love and ponders it. A woman is a counsellor and a guide at an age when we love to be guided and obedience is delight; while a girl would fain learn all things, meeting us with a girl's *naïveté* instead of a woman's tenderness. She affords a single triumph; with a woman there is resistance upon resistance to overcome; she has but joy and tears, a woman has rapture and remorse.

A girl cannot play the part of a mistress unless she is so corrupt that we turn from her with loathing; a woman has a thousand ways of preserving her power and her dignity; she has risked so much for love that she must bid him pass through his myriad transformations, while her too submissive rival gives a sense of too serene security which palls. If the one sacrifices her maidenly pride, the other immolates the honor of a whole family. A girl's coquetry is of the simplest, she thinks that all is said when the veil is laid aside; a woman's coquetry is endless, she shrouds herself in veil after veil, she satisfies every demand of man's vanity, the novice responds but to one.

And there are terrors, fears, and hesitations—trouble and storm in the love of a woman of thirty years, never to be found in a young girl's love. At thirty years a woman asks her lover to give her back the esteem she has forfeited for his sake; she lives only for him, her thoughts are full of his future, he must have a great career, she bids him make it glorious; she can obey, entreat, command, humble herself, or rise in pride; times without number she brings comfort when a young girl can only make

moan. And with all the advantages of her position, the woman of thirty can be a girl again, for she can play all parts, assume a girl's bashfulness, and grow the fairer even for a mischance.

Between these two feminine types lies the immeasurable difference which separates the foreseen from the unforeseen, strength from weakness. The woman of thirty satisfies every requirement; the young girl must satisfy none, under penalty of ceasing to be a young girl. Such ideas as these, developing in a young man's mind, help to strengthen the strongest of all passions, a passion in which all spontaneous and natural feeling is blended with the artificial sentiment created by conventional manners.

The most important and decisive step in a woman's life is the very one that she invariably regards as the most insignificant. After her marriage she is no longer her own mistress, she is the queen and the bond-slave of the domestic hearth. The sanctity of womanhood is incompatible with social liberty and social claims; and for a woman emancipation means corruption. If you give a stranger the right of entry into the sanctuary of home, do you not put yourself at his mercy? How then if she herself bids him enter in? Is not this an offence, or, to speak more accurately, a first step toward an offence? You must either accept this theory with all its consequences, or absolve illicit passion. French society hitherto has chosen the third and middle course of looking on and laughing when offences come, apparently upon the Spartan principle of condoning the theft and punishing clumsiness. And this system, it may be, is a very wise one. 'Tis a most appalling punishment to have all your neighbors pointing the finger of scorn at you, a punishment that a woman feels in her very heart. Women are tenacious, and all of them should be tenacious of respect; without esteem they cannot exist, esteem is the first demand that they make of love. The most corrupt among them feels that she must, in the first place, pledge the future to buy absolution for the past, and strives to

make her lover understand that only for irresistible bliss can she barter the respect which the world henceforth will refuse to her.

Some such reflections cross the mind of any woman who for the first time and alone receives a visit from a young man; and this especially when, like Charles de Vandenesse, the visitor is handsome or clever. And similarly there are not many young men who would fail to base some secret wish on one of the thousand and one ideas which justify the instinct that attracts them to a beautiful, witty, and unhappy woman like the Marquise d'Aiglemont.

Mme. d'Aiglemont, therefore, felt troubled when M. de Vandenesse was announced; and as for him, he was almost confused in spite of the assurance which is like a matter of costume for a diplomatist. But not for long. The Marquise took refuge at once in the friendliness of manner which women use as a defence against the misinterpretations of fatuity, a manner which admits of no afterthought, while it paves the way to sentiment (to make use of a figure of speech), tempering the transition through the ordinary forms of politeness. In this ambiguous position, where the four roads leading respectively to Indifference, Respect, Wonder, and Passion meet, a woman may stay as long as she pleases, but only at thirty years does she understand all the possibilities of the situation. Laughter, tenderness, and jest are all permitted to her at the crossing of the ways; she has acquired the tact by which she finds all the responsive chords in a man's nature, and skill in judging the sounds which she draws forth. Her silence is as dangerous as her speech. You will never read her at that age, nor discover if she is frank or false, nor how far she is serious in her admissions or merely laughing at you. She gives you the right to engage in a game of fence with her, and suddenly by a glance, a gesture of proved potency, she closes the combat and turns from you with your secret in her keeping, free to offer you up to a jest, free to interest herself in you, safe alike in her weakness and your strength.

Although the Marquise d'Aiglemont took up her position upon this neutral ground during the first interview, she knew how to preserve a high womanly dignity. The sorrows of which she never spoke seemed to hang over her assumed gayety like a light cloud obscuring the sun. When Vandenesse went out, after a conversation which he had enjoyed more than he had thought possible, he carried with him the conviction that this was like to be too costly a conquest for his aspirations.

"It would mean sentiment from here to yonder," he thought, "and correspondence enough to wear out a deputy second-clerk on his promotion. And yet if I really cared—"

Luckless phrase that has been the ruin of many an infatuated mortal. In France the way to love lies through self-love. Charles went back to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and imagined that she showed symptoms of pleasure in his conversation. And then, instead of giving himself up like a boy to the joy of falling in love, he tried to play a double rôle. He did his best to act passion and to keep cool enough to analyze the progress of this flirtation, to be lover and diplomatist at once; but youth and hot blood and analysis could only end in one way, over head and ears in love; for, natural or artificial, the Marquise was more than his match. Each time as he went out from Mme. d'Aiglemont, he strenuously held himself to his distrust, and submitted the progressive situations of his case to a rigorous scrutiny fatal to his own emotions.

"To-day she gave me to understand that she has been very unhappy and lonely," said he to himself, after the third visit, "and that but for her little girl she would have longed for death. She was perfectly resigned. Now as I am neither her brother nor her spiritual director, why should she confide her troubles to *me?* She loves me."

Two days later he came away apostrophizing modern manners.

"Love takes on the hue of every age. In 1822 love is a doctrinaire. Instead of proving love by deeds, as in times past, we have taken to argument and rhetoric and debate. Women's tactics are reduced to three shifts. In the first place, they declare that we cannot love as they love. (Coquetry! the Marquise simply threw it at me, like a challenge, this evening!) Next they grow pathetic, to appeal to our natural generosity or self-love; for does it not flatter a young man's vanity to console a woman for a great calamity. And lastly, they have a craze for virginity. She must have thought that I thought her very innocent. My good faith is like to become an excellent speculation."

But a day came when every suspicious idea was exhausted. He asked himself whether the Marquise was not sincere; whether so much suffering could be feigned, and why she should act the part of resignation? She lived in complete seclusion; she drank in silence of a cup of sorrow scarcely to be guessed unless from the accent of some chance exclamation in a voice always well under control. From that moment Charles felt a keen interest in Mme. d'Aiglemont. And yet, though his visits had come to be a recognized thing, and in some sort a necessity to them both, and though the hour was kept free by tacit agreement, Vandenesse still thought that this woman with whom he was in love was more clever than sincere. "Decidedly, she is an uncommonly clever woman," he used to say to himself as he went away.

When he came into the room, there was the Marquise in her favorite attitude, melancholy expressed in her whole form. She made no movement when he entered, only raised her eyes and looked full at him, but the glance that she gave him was like a smile. Mme. d'Aiglemont's manner meant confidence and sincere friendship, but of love there was no trace. Charles sat down and found nothing to say. A sensation for which no language exists troubled him.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked in a softened voice.

"Nothing. . . . Yes; I am thinking of something of which, as yet, you have not thought at all."

"What is it?"

"Why—the Congress is over."

"Well," she said, "and ought you to have been at the Congress?"

A direct answer would have been the most eloquent and delicate declaration of love; but Charles did not make it. Before the candid friendship in Mme. d'Aiglemont's face all the calculations of vanity, the hopes of love, and the diplomatist's doubts died away. She did not suspect, or she seemed not to suspect, his love for her; and Charles, in utter confusion turning upon himself, was forced to admit that he had said and done nothing which could warrant such a belief on her part. For M. de Vandenesse that evening, the Marquise was, as she had always been, simple and friendly, sincere in her sorrow, glad to have a friend, proud to find a nature responsive to her own—nothing more. It had not entered her mind that a woman could yield twice; she had known love—love lay bleeding still in the depths of her heart, but she did not imagine that bliss could bring her its rapture twice, for she believed not merely in the intellect, but in the soul; and for her love was no simple attraction; it drew her with all noble attractions.

In a moment Charles became a young man again, inthralled by the splendor of a nature so lofty. He wished for a fuller initiation into the secret history of a life blighted rather by fate than by her own fault. Mme. d'Aiglemont heard him ask the cause of the overwhelming sorrow which had blended all the harmonies of sadness with her beauty; she gave him one glance, but that searching look was like a seal set upon some solemn compact.

"Ask no more such questions of me," she said. "Four

years ago, on this very day, the man who loved me, for whom I would have given up everything, even my own self-respect, died, and died to save my name. That love was still young and pure and full of illusions when it came to an end. Before I gave way to passion—and never was woman so urged by fate—I had been drawn into the mistake that ruins many a girl's life, a marriage with a man whose agreeable manners concealed his emptiness. Marriage plucked my hopes away one by one. And now, to-day, I have forfeited happiness through marriage, as well as the happiness styled criminal, and I have known no happiness. Nothing is left to me. If I could not die, at the least I ought to be faithful to my memories."

No tears came with the words. Her eyes fell, and there was a slight twisting of the fingers interclasped, according to her wont. It was simply said, but in her voice there was a note of despair, deep as her love seemed to have been, which left Charles without a hope. The dreadful story of a life told in three sentences, with that twisting of the fingers for all comment, the might of anguish in a fragile woman, the dark depths masked by a fair face, the tears of four years of mourning fascinated Vandenesse; he sat silent and diminished in the presence of her woman's greatness and nobleness, seeing not the physical beauty so exquisite, so perfectly complete, but the soul so great in its power to feel. He had found, at last, the ideal of his fantastic imaginings, the ideal so vigorously invoked by all who look on life as the raw material of a passion for which many a one seeks ardently, and dies before he has grasped the whole of the dreamed-of treasure.

With those words of hers in his ears, in the presence of her sublime beauty, his own thoughts seemed poor and narrow. Powerless as he felt himself to find words of his own, simple enough and lofty enough to scale the heights of this exaltation, he took refuge in platitudes as to the destiny of women.

"Madame, we must either forget our pain, or hollow out a tomb for ourselves."

But reason always cuts a poor figure beside sentiment; the one being essentially restricted, like everything that is positive, while the other is infinite. To set to work to reason where you are required to feel, is the mark of a limited nature. Vandenesse therefore held his peace, sat a while with his eyes fixed upon her, then came away. A prey to novel thoughts which exalted woman for him, he was in something the same position as a painter who has taken the vulgar studio model for a type of womanhood, and suddenly confronts the "Mnemosyne" of the Musée—that noblest and least appreciated of antique statues.

Charles de Vandenesse was deeply in love. He loved Mme. d'Aiglemont with the loyalty of youth, with the fervor that communicates such ineffable charm to a first passion, with a simplicity of heart of which a man only recovers some fragments when he loves again at a later day. Delicious first passion of youth, almost always deliciously savored by the woman who calls it forth; for at the golden prime of thirty, from the poetic summit of a woman's life, she can look out over the whole course of love—backward into the past, forward into the future—and, knowing all the price to be paid for love, enjoys her bliss with the dread of losing it ever present with her. Her soul is still fair with her waning youth, and passion daily gathers strength from the dismaying prospect of the coming days.

"This is love," Vandenesse said to himself this time as he left the Marquise, "and for my misfortune I love a woman wedded to her memories. It is hard work to struggle against a dead rival, never present to make blunders and fall out of favor, nothing of him left but his better qualities. What is it but a sort of high treason against the Ideal to attempt to break the charm of memory, to destroy the hopes that survive a lost lover, precisely because he only awakened longings, and all that is loveliest and most enchanting in love?"

These sober reflections, due to the discouragement and dread of failure with which love begins in earnest, were the last expiring effort of diplomatic reasoning. Thenceforward

he knew no afterthoughts, he was the plaything of his love, and lost himself in the nothings of that strange inexplicable happiness which is full fed by a chance word, by silence, or a vague hope. He tried to love Platonically, came daily to breathe the air that she breathed, became almost a part of her house, and went everywhere with her, slave as he was of a tyrannous passion compounded of egoism and devotion of the completest. Love has its own instinct, finding the way to the heart, as the feeblest insect finds the way to its flower, with a will which nothing can dismay nor turn aside. If feeling is sincere, its destiny is not doubtful. Let a woman begin to think that her life depends on the sincerity or fervor or earnestness which her lover shall put into his longings, and is there not sufficient in the thought to put her through all the tortures of dread? It is impossible for a woman, be she wife or mother, to be secure from a young man's love. One thing it is within her power to do—to refuse to see him as soon as she learns a secret which she never fails to guess. But this is too decided a step to take at an age when marriage has become a prosaic and tiresome yoke, and conjugal affection is something less than tepid (if indeed her husband has not already begun to neglect her). Is a woman plain? She is flattered by a love which gives her fairness. Is she young and charming? She is only to be won by a fascination as great as her own power to charm, that is to say, a fascination wellnigh irresistible. Is she virtuous? There is a love sublime in its earthliness which leads her to find something like absolution in the very greatness of the surrender and glory in a hard struggle. Everything is a snare. No lesson, therefore, is too severe where the temptation is so strong. The seclusion in which the Greeks and Orientals kept and keep their women, an example more and more followed in modern England, is the only safeguard of domestic morality; but under this system there is an end of all the charm of social intercourse; and society, and good breeding, and refinement of manners become impossible. The nations must take their choice.

So a few months went by, and Mme. d'Aiglemont discovered that her life was closely bound with this young man's life, without overmuch confusion in her surprise, and felt with something almost like pleasure that she shared his tastes and his thoughts. Had she adopted Vandenesse's ideas? Or was it Vandenesse who had made her lightest whims his own? She was not careful to inquire. She had been swept out already into the current of passion, and yet this adorable woman told herself with the confident reiteration of misgiving: "Ah! no. I will be faithful to him who died for me."

Pascal said that "the doubt of God implies belief in God." And similarly it may be said that a woman only parleys when she has surrendered. A day came when the Marquise admitted to herself that she was loved, and with that admission came a time of wavering among countless conflicting thoughts and feelings. The superstitions of experience spoke their language. Should she be happy? Was it possible that she should find happiness outside the limits of the laws which society rightly or wrongly has set up for humanity to live by? Hitherto her cup of life had been full of bitterness. Was there any happy issue possible for the ties which united two human beings held apart by social conventions? And might not happiness be bought too dear? Still, this so ardently desired happiness, for which it is so natural to seek, might perhaps be found after all. Curiosity is always retained on the lover's side in the suit. The secret tribunal was still sitting when Vandenesse appeared, and his presence put the metaphysical spectre, reason, to flight.

If such are the successive transformations through which a sentiment, transient though it be, passes in a young man and a woman of thirty, there comes a moment of time when the shades of difference blend into each other, when all reasonings end in a single and final reflection which is lost and absorbed in the desire which it confirms. Then the longer the resistance, the mightier the voice of love. And here endeth this lesson, or rather this study made from the *écorché*, to borrow a most graphic term from the studio, for in this

history it is not so much intended to portray love as to lay bare its mechanism and its dangers. From this moment every day adds color to these dry bones, clothes them again with living flesh and blood and the charm of youth, and puts vitality into their movements; till they glow once more with the beauty, the persuasive grace of sentiment, the loveliness of life.

Charles found Mme. d'Aiglemont absorbed in thought, and to his "What is it?" spoken in thrilling tones grown persuasive with the heart's soft magic, she was careful not to reply. The delicious question bore witness to the perfect unity of their spirits; and the Marquise felt, with a woman's wonderful intuition, that to give any expression to the sorrow in her heart would be to make an advance. If, even now, each one of those words was fraught with significance for them both, in what fathomless depths might she not plunge at the first step? She read herself with a clear and lucid glance. She was silent, and Vandenesse followed her example.

"I am not feeling well," she said at last, taking alarm at the pause fraught with such great moment for them both, when the language of the eyes completely filled the blank left by the helplessness of speech.

"Madame," said Charles, and his voice was tender but unsteady with strong feeling, "soul and body are both dependent on each other. If you were happy, you would be young and fresh. Why do you refuse to ask of love all that love has taken from you? You think that your life is over when it is only just beginning. Trust yourself to a friend's care. It is so sweet to be loved."

"I am old already," she said; "there is no reason why I should not continue to suffer as in the past. And 'one must love,' do you say? Well, I must not, and I cannot. Your friendship has put some sweetness into my life, but besides you I care for no one, no one could efface my memories. A friend I accept; I should fly from a lover. Besides, would

it be a very generous thing to do, to exchange a withered heart for a young heart; to smile upon illusions which now I cannot share, to cause happiness in which I should either have no belief or tremble to lose? I should perhaps respond to his devotion with egoism, should weigh and deliberate while he felt; my memory would resent the poignancy of his happiness. No, if you love once, that love is never replaced, you see. Indeed, who would have my heart at this price?"

There was a tinge of heartless coquetry in the words, the last effort of discretion.

"If he loses courage, well and good, I shall live alone and faithful." The thought came from the very depths of the woman; for her it was the too slender willow twig caught in vain by a swimmer swept out by the current.

Vandenesse's involuntary shudder at her dictum pleaded more eloquently for him than all his past assiduity. Nothing moves a woman so much as the discovery of a gracious delicacy in us, such a refinement of sentiment as her own, for a woman the grace and delicacy are sure tokens of truth. Charles's start revealed the sincerity of his love. Mme. d'Aiglemont learned the strength of his affection from the intensity of his pain.

"Perhaps you are right," he said coldly. "New love, new vexation of spirit."

Then he changed the subject, and spoke of indifferent matters; but he was visibly moved, and he concentrated his gaze on Mme. d'Aiglemont as if he were seeing her for the last time.

"Adieu, madame," he said, with emotion in his voice.

"*Au revoir*," said she, with that subtle coquetry, the secret of a very few among women.

He made no answer and went.

When Charles was no longer there, when his empty chair spoke for him, regrets flocked in upon her, and she found fault with herself. Passion makes an immense advance as soon as a woman persuades herself that she has failed somewhat in generosity or hurt a noble nature. In love there is

never any need to be on our guard against the worst in us; that is a safeguard; a woman only surrenders at the summons of a virtue. "The floor of hell is paved with good intentions"—it is no preacher's paradox.

Vandenesse stopped away for several days. Every evening at the accustomed hour the Marquise sat expectant in remorseful impatience. She could not write—that would be a declaration, and, moreover, her instinct told her that he would come back. On the sixth day he was announced, and never had she heard the name with such delight. Her joy frightened her.

"You have punished me well," she said, addressing him.

Vandenesse gazed at her in astonishment.

"Punished?" he echoed. "And for what?" He understood her quite well, but he meant to be avenged for all that he had suffered as soon as she suspected it.

"Why have you not come to see me?" she demanded with a smile.

"Then have you seen no visitors?" asked he, parrying the question.

"Yes. M. de Ronquerolles and M. de Marsay and young d'Esgrignon came and stayed for nearly two hours, the first two yesterday, the last this morning. And besides, I have had a call, I believe, from Mme. Firmiani and from your sister, Mme. de Listomère."

Here was a new infliction, torture which none can comprehend unless they know love as a fierce and all-invading tyrant whose mildest symptom is a monstrous jealousy, a perpetual desire to snatch away the beloved from every other influence.

"What!" thought he to himself, "she has seen visitors, she has been with happy creatures, and talking to them, while I was unhappy and all alone."

He buried his annoyance forthwith, and consigned love to the depths of his heart, like a coffin to the sea. His thoughts were of the kind that never find expression in

words; they pass through the mind swiftly as a deadly acid, that poisons as it evaporates and vanishes. His brow, however, was overclouded; and Mme. d'Aiglemont, guided by her woman's instinct, shared his sadness without understanding it. She had hurt him, unwittingly, as Vandenesse knew. He talked over his position with her, as if his jealousy were one of those hypothetical cases which lovers love to discuss. Then the Marquise understood it all. She was so deeply moved that she could not keep back the tears—and so these lovers entered the heaven of love.

Heaven and Hell are two great imaginative conceptions formulating our ideas of Joy and Sorrow—those two poles about which human existence revolves. Is not Heaven a figure of speech covering now and for evermore an infinite of human feeling impossible to express save in its accidents —since that Joy is one? And what is Hell but the symbol of our infinite power to suffer tortures so diverse that of our pain it is possible to fashion works of art, for no two human sorrows are alike?

One evening the two lovers sat alone and side by side, silently watching one of the fairest transformations of the sky, a cloudless heaven taking hues of pale gold and purple from the last rays of the sunset. With the slow fading of the daylight, sweet thoughts seem to awaken, and soft stirrings of passion and a mysterious sense of trouble in the midst of calm. Nature sets before us vague images of bliss, bidding us enjoy the happiness within our reach, or lament it when it has fled. In those moments fraught with enchantment, when the tender light in the canopy of the sky blends in harmony with the spells working within, it is difficult to resist the heart's desires grown so magically potent. Cares are blunted, joy becomes ecstasy; pain, intolerable anguish. The pomp of sunset gives the signal for confessions and draws them forth. Silence grows more dangerous than speech, for it gives to eyes all the power of the infinite of the heavens reflected in them. And for speech, the least word has irresistible might. Is not the light infused

into the voice and purple into the glances? Is not heaven within us, or do we feel that we are in the heavens?

Vandenesse and Julie—for so she had allowed herself to be called for the past few days by him whom she loved to speak of as Charles—Vandenesse and Julie were talking together, but they had drifted very far from their original subject; and if their spoken words had grown meaningless, they listened in delight to the unspoken thoughts that lurked in the sounds. Her hand lay in his. She had abandoned it to him without a thought that she had granted a proof of love.

Together they leaned forward to look out upon a majestic cloud country, full of snows and glaciers and fantastic mountain peaks with gray stains of shadow on their sides, a picture composed of sharp contrasts between fiery red and the shadows of darkness, filling the skies with a fleeting vision of glory which cannot be reproduced—magnificent swaddling-bands of sunrise, bright shrouds of the dying sun. As they leaned, Julie's hair brushed lightly against Vandenesse's cheek. She felt that light contact, and shuddered violently, and he even more, for imperceptibly they both had reached one of those inexplicable crises when quiet has wrought upon the senses until every faculty of perception is so keen that the slightest shock fills the heart lost in melancholy with sadness that overflows in tears; or raises joy to ecstasy in a heart that is lost in the vertigo of love. Almost involuntarily Julie pressed her lover's hand. That wooing pressure gave courage to his timidity. All the joy of the present, all the hopes of the future were blended in the emotion of a first caress, the bashful trembling kiss that Mme. d'Aiglemont received upon her cheek. The slighter the concession, the more dangerous and insinuating it was. For their double misfortune it was only too sincere a revelation. Two noble natures had met and blended, drawn each to each by every law of natural attraction, held apart by every ordinance.

General d'Aiglemont came in at that very moment.

"The Ministry has gone out," he said. "Your uncle will be in the new cabinet. So you stand an uncommonly good chance of an embassy, Vandenesse."

Charles and Julie looked at each other and flushed red. That blush was one more tie to unite them; there was one thought and one remorse in either mind; between two lovers guilty of a kiss there is a bond quite as strong and terrible as the bond between two robbers who have murdered a man. Something had to be said by way of reply.

"I do not care to leave Paris now," Charles said.

"We know why," said the General, with the knowing air of a man who discovers a secret. "You do not like to leave your uncle, because you do not wish to lose your chance of succeeding to the title."

The Marquise took refuge in her room, and in her mind passed a pitiless verdict upon her husband.

"His stupidity is really beyond anything!"

IV

THE FINGER OF GOD

BETWEEN the Barrière d'Italie and the Barrière de la Santé, along the boulevard which leads to the Jardin des Plantes, you have a view of Paris fit to send an artist or the tourist, the most *blasé* in matters of landscape, into ecstasies. Reach the slightly higher ground where the line of boulevard, shaded by tall, thick-spreading trees, curves with the grace of some green and silent forest avenue, and you see spread out at your feet a deep valley populous with factories looking almost countrified among green trees and the brown streams of the Bièvre or the Gobelins.

On the opposite slope, beneath some thousands of roofs packed close together like heads in a crowd, lurks the squalor of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. The imposing cupola of the Panthéon, and the grim melancholy dome of the Val-

du-Grace, tower proudly up above a whole town in itself, built amphitheatre-wise; every tier being grotesquely represented by a crooked line of street, so that the two public monuments look like a huge pair of giants dwarfing into insignificance the poor little houses and the tallest poplars in the valley. To your left behold the observatory, the daylight, pouring athwart its windows and galleries, producing such fantastical strange effects that the building looks like a black spectral skeleton. Further yet in the distance rises the elegant lantern tower of the Invalides, soaring up between the bluish pile of the Luxembourg and the gray towers of Saint-Sulpice. From this standpoint the lines of the architecture are blended with green leaves and gray shadows, and change every moment with every aspect of the heavens, every alteration of light or color in the sky. Afar, the skyey spaces themselves seem to be full of buildings; near, wind the serpentine curves of waving trees and green footpaths.

Away to your right, through a great gap in this singular landscape, you see the canal Saint-Martin, a long pale stripe with its edging of reddish stone quays and fringes of lime avenue. The long rows of buildings beside it, in genuine Roman style, are the public granaries.

Beyond, again, on the very last plane of all, see the smoke-dimmed slopes of Belleville covered with houses and windmills, which blend their freaks of outline with the chance effects of cloud. And still, between that horizon, vague as some childish recollection, and the serried range of roofs in the valley, a whole city lies out of sight: a huge city, engulfed, as it were, in a vast hollow between the pinnacles of the Hôpital de la Pitié and the ridge line of the Cimetière de l'Est, between suffering on the one hand and death on the other; a city sending up a smothered roar like ocean grumbling at the foot of a cliff, as if to let you know that "I am here!"

When the sunlight pours like a flood over this strip of Paris, purifying and etherealizing the outlines, kindling

answering lights here and there in the window panes, brightening the red tiles, flaming about the golden crosses, whitening walls and transforming the atmosphere into a gauzy veil, calling up rich contrasts of light and fantastic shadow; when the sky is blue and earth quivers in the heat, and the bells are pealing, then you shall see one of the eloquent fairy scenes which stamp themselves forever on the imagination, a scene that shall find as fanatical worshippers as the wondrous views of Naples and Byzantium or the isles of Florida. Nothing is wanting to complete the harmony, the murmur of the world of men and the idyllic quiet of solitude, the voices of a million human creatures and the voice of God. There lies a whole capital beneath the peaceful cypresses of Père-Lachaise.

The landscape lay in all its beauty, sparkling in the spring sunlight, as I stood looking out over it one morning, my back against a huge elm-tree that flung its yellow flowers to the wind. And at the sight of the rich and glorious view before me, I thought bitterly of the scorn with which even in our literature we affect to hold this land of ours, and poured maledictions on the pitiable plutocrats who fall out of love with fair France, and spend their gold to acquire the right of sneering at their own country, by going through Italy at a gallop and inspecting that desecrated land through an opera-glass. I cast loving eyes on modern Paris; I was beginning to dream dreams, when the sound of a kiss disturbed the solitude and put philosophy to flight. Down the side walk, along the steep bank, above the rippling water, I saw beyond the Pont des Gobelins the figure of a woman, dressed with the daintiest simplicity; she was still young, as it seemed to me, and the blithe gladness of the landscape was reflected in her sweet face. Her companion, a handsome young man, had just set down a little boy. A prettier child has never been seen, and to this day I do not know whether it was the little one or his mother who received the kiss. In their young faces, in their eyes, their smile, their every movement, you could read the same deep

and tender thought. Their arms were interlaced with such glad swiftness; they drew close together with such marvellous unanimity of impulse that, conscious of nothing but themselves, they did not so much as see me. A second child, however—a little girl, who had turned her back upon them in sullen discontent—threw me a glance, and the expression of her eyes startled me. She was as pretty and as engaging as the little brother whom she left to run about by himself, sometimes before, sometimes after their mother and her companion; but her charm was less childish, and now, as she stood mute and motionless, her attitude and demeanor suggested a torpid snake. There was something indescribably mechanical in the way in which the pretty woman and her companion paced up and down. In absence of mind, probably, they were content to walk to and fro between the little bridge and a carriage that stood waiting near by at a corner in the Boulevard, turning, stopping short now and again, looking into each other's eyes, or breaking into laughter as their casual talk grew lively or languid, grave or gay.

I watched this delicious picture a while from my hiding-place by the great elm-tree, and should have turned away no doubt and respected their privacy, if it had not been for a chance discovery. In the face of the brooding, silent, elder child I saw traces of thought over-deep for her age. When her mother and the young man at her side turned and came near, her head was frequently lowered; the furtive sidelong glances of intelligence that she gave the pair and the child her brother were nothing less than extraordinary. Sometimes the pretty woman or her friend would stroke the little boy's fair curls, or lay a caressing finger against the baby throat or the white collar as he played at keeping step with them; and no words can describe the shrewd subtlety, the ingenuous malice, the fierce intensity which lighted up that pallid little face with the faint circles already round the eyes. Truly there was a man's power of passion in that strange-looking, delicate little girl. There were traces of

suffering or of thought in her; and which is the more certain token of death when life is in blossom—physical suffering, or the malady of too early thought preying upon a soul as yet in bud? Perhaps a mother knows. For my own part, I know of nothing more dreadful to see than an old man's thoughts on a child's forehead; even blasphemy from girlish lips is less monstrous.

The almost stupid solidity of this child who had begun to think already, her rare gestures, everything about her, interested me. I scrutinized her curiously. Then the common whim of the observer drew me to compare her with her brother, and to note their likeness and unlikeness.

Her brown hair and dark eyes and look of precocious power made a rich contrast with the little one's fair curled head and sea-green eyes and winning helplessness. She, perhaps, was seven or eight years of age; the boy was full four years younger. Both children were dressed alike; but here again, looking closely, I noticed a difference. It was very slight, a little thing enough; but in the light of after events I saw that it meant a whole romance in the past, a whole tragedy to come. The little brown-haired maid wore a linen collar with a plain hem, her brother's was edged with dainty embroidery, that was all; but therein lay the confession of a heart's secret, a tacit preference which a child can read in the mother's inmost soul as clearly as if the spirit of God revealed it. The fair-haired child, careless and glad, looked almost like a girl, his skin was so fair and fresh, his movements so graceful, his look so sweet; while his older sister, in spite of her energy, in spite of the beauty of her features and her dazzling complexion, looked like a sickly little boy. In her bright eyes there was none of the humid softness which lends such charm to children's faces; they seemed, like courtiers' eyes, to be dried by some inner fire; and in her pallor there was a certain swarthy olive tint, the sign of vigorous character. Twice her little brother came to her, holding out a tiny hunting-horn with a touching charm, a winning look, and wistful ex-

pression, which would have sent Charlet into ecstasies, but she only scowled in answer to his "Here, Hélène, will you take it?" so persuasively spoken. The little girl, so sombre and vehement beneath her apparent indifference, shuddered, and even flushed red when her brother came near her; but the little one seemed not to notice his sister's dark mood, and his unconsciousness, blended with earnestness, marked a final difference in character between the child and the little girl, whose brow was overclouded already by the gloom of a man's knowledge and cares.

"Mamma, Hélène will not play," cried the little one, seizing an opportunity to complain while the two stood silent on the Pont des Gobelins.

"Let her alone, Charles; you know very well that she is always cross."

Tears sprang to Hélène's eyes at the words so thoughtlessly uttered by her mother as she turned abruptly to the young man by her side. The child devoured the speech in silence, but she gave her brother one of those sagacious looks that seemed inexplicable to me, glancing with a sinister expression from the bank where he stood to the Bièvre, then at the bridge and the view, and then at me.

I was afraid lest my presence should disturb the happy couple; I slipped away and took refuge behind a thicket of elder trees, which completely screened me from all eyes. Sitting quietly on the summit of the bank, I watched the ever-changing landscape and the fierce-looking little girl, for with my head almost on a level with the Boulevard I could still see her through the leaves. Hélène seemed uneasy over my disappearance, her dark eyes looked for me down the alley and behind the trees with indefinable curiosity. What was I to her? Then Charles's baby laughter rang out like a bird's song in the silence. The tall, young man, with the same fair hair, was dancing him in his arms, showering kisses upon him, and the meaningless baby words of that "little language" which rises to our lips when we play with children. The mother looked on smiling, now

and then, doubtless, putting in some low word that came up from the heart, for her companion would stop short in his full happiness, and the blue eyes that turned toward her were full of glowing light and love and worship. Their voices, blending with the child's voice, reached me with a vague sense of a caress. The three figures, charming in themselves, composed a lovely scene in a glorious landscape, filling it with a pervasive unimaginable grace. A delicately fair woman, radiant with smiles, a child of love, a young man with the irresistible charm of youth, a cloudless sky; nothing was wanting in nature to complete a perfect harmony for the delight of the soul. I found myself smiling as if their happiness had been my own.

The clocks struck nine. The young man gave a tender embrace to his companion, and went toward the tilbury which an old servant drove slowly to meet him. The lady had grown grave and almost sad. The child's prattle sounded unchecked through the last farewell kisses. Then the tilbury rolled away, and the lady stood motionless, listening to the sound of the wheels, watching the little cloud of dust raised by its passage along the road. Charles ran down the green pathway back to the bridge to join his sister. I heard his silver voice calling to her.

"Why did you not come to say good-by to my good friend?" cried he.

Hélène looked up. Never surely did such hatred gleam from a child's eyes as from hers at that moment when she turned them on the brother who stood beside her on the bank side. She gave him an angry push. Charles lost his footing on the steep slope, stumbled over the roots of a tree, and fell headlong forward, dashing his forehead on the sharp-edged stones of the embankment, and, covered with blood, disappeared over the edge into the muddy river. The turbid water closed over a fair bright head with a shower of splashes; one sharp shriek after another rang in my ears; then the sounds were stifled by the thick stream, and the poor child sank with a dull sound as if a

stone had been thrown into the water. The accident had happened with more than lightning swiftness. I sprang down the footpath, and Hélène, stupefied with horror, shrieked again and again: "Mamma! mamma!"

The mother was there at my side. She had flown to the spot like a bird. But neither a mother's eyes nor mine could find the exact place where the little one had gone under. There was a wide space of black hurrying water, and below in the bed of the Bièvre ten feet of mud. There was not the smallest possibility of saving the child. No one is stirring at that hour on a Sunday morning, and there are neither barges nor anglers on the Bièvre. There was not a creature in sight, not a pole to plumb the filthy stream. What need was there for me to explain how the ugly-looking accident had happened—accident or misfortune, whichever it might be? Had Hélène avenged her father? Her jealousy surely was the sword of God. And yet when I looked at the mother I shivered. What fearful ordeal awaited her when she should return to her husband, the judge before whom she must stand all her days? And here with her was an inseparable, incorruptible witness. A child's forehead is transparent, a child's face hides no thoughts, and a lie, like a red flame set within, glows out in red that colors even the eyes. But the unhappy woman had not thought as yet of the punishment awaiting her at home; she was staring into the Bièvre.

Such an event must inevitably send ghastly echoes through a woman's life, and here is one of the most terrible of the reverberations that troubled Julie's love from time to time.

Several years had gone by. The Marquis de Vandenesse wore mourning for his father, and succeeded to his estates. One evening, therefore, after dinner it happened that a notary was present in his house. This was no pettifogging lawyer after Sterne's pattern, but a very solid, substantial notary of Paris, one of your estimable men who do a stupid

thing pompously, set down a foot heavily upon your private corn, and then ask what in the world there is to cry out about? If, by accident, they come to know the full extent of the enormity, "Upon my word," cry they, "I hadn't a notion!" This was a well-intentioned ass, in short, who could see nothing in life but deeds and documents.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining with M. de Vandenesse; her husband had excused himself before dinner was over, for he was taking his two children to the play. They were to go to some Boulevard theatre or other, to the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaieté, sensational melodrama being judged harmless here in Paris, and suitable pabulum for childhood, because innocence is always triumphant in the fifth act. The boy and girl had teased their father to be there before the curtain rose, so he had left the table before dessert was served.

But the notary, the imperturbable notary, utterly incapable of asking himself why Mme. d'Aiglemont should have allowed her husband and children to go without her to the play, sat on as if he were screwed to his chair. Dinner was over, dessert had been prolonged by discussion, and coffee delayed. All these things consumed time, doubtless precious, and drew impatient movements from that charming woman; she looked not unlike a thoroughbred pawing the ground before a race; but the man of law, to whom horses and women were equally unknown quantities, simply thought the Marquise a very lively and sparkling personage. So enchanted was he to be in the company of a woman of fashion and a political celebrity, that he was exerting himself to shine in conversation, and, taking the lady's forced smile for approbation, talked on with unflagging spirit, till the Marquise was almost out of patience.

The master of the house, in concert with the lady, had more than once maintained an eloquent silence when the lawyer expected a civil reply; but these significant pauses

were employed by the talkative nuisance in looking for anecdotes in the fire. M. de Vandenesse had recourse to his watch; the charming Marquise tried the experiment of fastening her bonnet strings, and made as if she would go. But she did not go, and the notary, blind and deaf, and delighted with himself, was quite convinced that his interesting conversational powers were sufficient to keep the lady on the spot.

"I shall certainly have that woman for a client," said he to himself.

Meanwhile the Marquise stood, putting on her gloves, twisting her fingers, looking from the equally impatient Marquis de Vandenesse to the lawyer, still pounding away. At every pause in the worthy man's fire of witticisms the charming pair heaved a sigh of relief, and their looks said plainly, "At last! He is really going!"

Nothing of the kind. It was a nightmare which could only end in exasperating the two impassioned creatures, on whom the lawyer had something of the fascinating effect of a snake on a pair of birds; before long they would be driven to cut him short.

The clever notary was giving them the history of the discreditable ways in which one du Tillet (a stockbroker then much in favor) had laid the foundations of his fortune; all the ins and outs of the whole disgraceful business were accurately put before them; and the narrator was in the very middle of his tale when M. de Vandenesse heard the clock strike nine. Then it became clear to him that his legal adviser was very emphatically an idiot who must be sent forthwith about his business. He stopped him resolutely with a gesture.

"The tongs, my lord Marquis?" queried the notary, handing the object in question to his client.

"No, monsieur, I am compelled to send you away. Mme. d'Aiglemont wishes to join her children, and I shall have the honor of escorting her."

"Nine o'clock already! Time goes like a shadow in

pleasant company," said the man of law, who had talked on end for the past hour.

He looked for his hat, planted himself before the fire, with a suppressed hiccough; and, without heeding the Marquise's withering glances, spoke once more to his impatient client:

"To sum up, my lord Marquis. Business before all things. To-morrow, then, we must subpœna your brother; we will proceed to make out the inventory, and faith, after that—"

So ill had the lawyer understood his instructions, that his impression was the exact opposite to the one intended. It was a delicate matter, and Vandenesse, in spite of himself, began to put the thick-headed notary right. The discussion which followed took up a certain amount of time.

"Listen," the diplomatist said at last at a sign from the lady, "you are puzzling my brains; come back to-morrow at nine o'clock, and bring my solicitor with you."

"But, as I have the honor of observing, my lord Marquis, we are not certain of finding M. Desroches to-morrow, and if the writ is not issued by noon to-morrow, the days of grace will expire, and then—"

As he spoke, a carriage entered the courtyard. The poor woman turned sharply away at the sound to hide the tears in her eyes. The Marquis rang to give the servant orders to say that he was not at home; but before the footman could answer the bell, the lady's husband reappeared. He had returned unexpectedly from the Gaieté, and held both children by the hand. The little girl's eyes were red; the boy was fretful and very cross.

"What can have happened?" asked the Marquise.

"I will tell you by and by," said the General, and catching a glimpse through an open door of newspapers on the table in the adjoining sitting-room, he went off. The Marquise, at the end of her patience, flung herself down on the sofa in desperation. The notary, thinking it incumbent upon

him to be amiable with the children, spoke to the little boy in an insinuating tone:

"Well, my little man, and what is there on at the theatre?"

"'The Valley of the Torrent,'" said Gustave sulkily.

"Upon my word and honor," declared the notary, "authors nowadays are half crazy. 'The Valley of the Torrent'! Why not the Torrent of the Valley? It is conceivable that a valley might be without a torrent in it; now if they had said the Torrent of the Valley, that would have been something clear, something precise, something definite and comprehensible. But never mind that. Now, how is a drama to take place in a torrent and in a valley? You will tell me that in these days the principal attraction lies in the scenic effect, and the title is a capital advertisement.—And did you enjoy it, my little friend?" he continued, sitting down before the child.

When the notary pursued his inquiries as to the possibilities of a drama in the bed of a torrent, the little girl turned slowly away and began to cry. Her mother did not notice this in her intense annoyance.

"Oh! yes, monsieur, I enjoyed it very much," said the child. "There was a dear little boy in the play, and he was all alone in the world, because his papa could not have been his real papa. And when he came to the top of the bridge over the torrent, a big, naughty man with a beard, dressed all in black, came and threw him into the water. And then Hélène began to sob and cry, and everybody scolded us, and father brought us away quick, quick—"

M. de Vandenesse and the Marquise looked on in dull amazement, as if all power to think or move had been suddenly paralyzed.

"Do be quiet, Gustave!" cried the General. "I told you that you were not to talk about anything that happened at the play, and you have forgotten what I said already."

"Oh, my lord Marquis, your lordship must excuse him,"

cried the notary. "I ought not to have asked questions, but I had no idea—"

"He ought not to have answered them," said the General, looking sternly at the child.

It seemed that the Marquise and the master of the house both perfectly understood why the children had come back so suddenly. Mme. d'Aiglemont looked at her daughter, and rose as if to go to her, but a terrible convulsion passed over her face, and all that could be read in it was relentless severity.

"That will do, Hélène," she said. "Go into the other room, and leave off crying."

"What can she have done, poor child?" asked the notary, thinking to appease the mother's anger and to stop Hélène's tears at one stroke. "So pretty as she is, she must be as good as can be; never anything but a joy to her mother, I will be bound. Isn't that so, my little girl?"

Hélène cowered, looked at her mother, dried her eyes, struggled for composure, and took refuge in the next room.

"And you, madame, are too good a mother not to love all your children alike. You are too good a woman, besides, to have any of those lamentable preferences which have such fatal effects, as we lawyers have only too much reason to know. Society goes through our hands; we see its passions in that most revolting form, greed. Here it is the mother of a family trying to disinherit her husband's children to enrich the others whom she loves better; or it is the husband who tries to leave all his property to the child who has done his best to earn his mother's hatred. And then begin quarrels, and fears, and deeds, and defeasances, and sham sales, and trusts, and all the rest of it; a pretty mess, in fact, it is pitiable, upon my honor, pitiable! There are fathers that will spend their whole lives in cheating their children and robbing their wives. Yes, robbing is the only word for it. We were talking of tragedy; oh! I can assure you of this, that if we were at liberty to tell the real reasons of some donations that I know of, our modern dramatists would have the mate-

rial for some sensational bourgeois dramas. How the wife manages to get her way, as she invariably does, I cannot think; for in spite of appearances, and in spite of their weakness, it is always the women who carry the day. Ah! by the way, they don't take *me* in. I always know the reason at the bottom of those predilections which the world politely styles 'unaccountable.' But in justice to the husbands, I must say that *they* never discover anything. You will tell me that this is a merciful dispens—"

Hélène had come back to the drawing-room with her father, and was listening attentively. So well did she understand all that was said that she gave her mother a frightened glance, feeling, with a child's quick instinct, that these remarks would aggravate the punishment hanging over her. The Marquise turned her white face to Vandenesse; and, with terror in her eyes, indicated her husband, who stood with his eyes fixed absently on the flower pattern of the carpet. The diplomatist, accomplished man of the world though he was, could no longer contain his wrath, he gave the man of law a withering glance.

"Step this way, sir," he said, and he went hurriedly to the door of the antechamber; the notary left his sentence half finished, and followed, quaking, and the husband and wife were left together.

"Now, sir," said the Marquis de Vandenesse—he banged the drawing-room door, and spoke with concentrated rage—"ever since dinner you have done nothing but make blunders and talk folly. For heaven's sake, go. You will make the most frightful mischief before you have done. If you are a clever man in your profession, keep to your profession; and if by any chance you should go into society, endeavor to be more circumspect."

With that he went back to the drawing-room, and did not even wish the notary good-evening. For a moment that worthy stood dumfounded, bewildered, utterly at a loss. Then, when the buzzing in his ears subsided, he thought he heard some one moaning in the next room. Footsteps came

and went, and bells were violently rung. He was by no means anxious to meet the Marquis again, and found the use of his legs to make good his escape, only to run against a hurrying crowd of servants at the door.

"Just the way with all these grand folk," said he to himself outside in the street as he looked about for a cab. "They lead you on to talk with compliments, and you think you are amusing them. Not a bit of it. They treat you insolently; put you at a distance; even put you out at the door without scruple. After all, I talked very cleverly, I said nothing but what was sensible, well turned, and discreet; and, upon my word, he advises me to be more circumspect in future. I will take good care of that! Eh! the mischief take it! I am a notary and a member of my chamber!—Pshaw! it was an ambassador's fit of temper, nothing is sacred for people of that kind. To-morrow he shall explain what he meant by saying that I had done nothing but blunder and talk nonsense in his house. I will ask him for an explanation—that is, I will ask him to explain my mistake. After all is done and said, I am in the wrong perhaps—Upon my word, it is very good of me to cudgel my brains like this. What business is it of mine?"

So the notary went home and laid the enigma before his spouse, with a complete account of the evening's events related in sequence.

And she replied, "My dear Crottat, his Excellency was perfectly right when he said that you had done nothing but blunder and talk folly."

"Why?"

"My dear, if I told you why, it would not prevent you from doing the same thing somewhere else to-morrow. I tell you again—talk of nothing but business when you go out; that is my advice to you."

"If you will not tell me, I shall ask him to-morrow—"

"Why, dear me! the veriest noodle is careful to hide a thing of that kind, and do you suppose that an ambassador

will tell you about it? Really, Crottat, I have never known you so utterly devoid of common-sense."

"Thank you, my dear."

V

TWO MEETINGS

ONE OF NAPOLEON'S orderly staff-officers, who shall be known in this history only as the General or the Marquis, had come to spend the spring at Versailles. He had made a large fortune under the Restoration; and as his place at Court would not allow him to go very far from Paris, he had taken a country house between the church and the barrier of Montreuil, on the road that leads to the Avenue de Saint-Cloud.

The house had been built originally as a retreat for the short-lived loves of some *grand seigneur*. The grounds were very large; the gardens on either side extending from the first houses of Montreuil to the thatched cottages near the barrier, so that the owner could enjoy all the pleasures of solitude with the city almost at his gates. By an odd piece of contradiction, the whole front of the house itself, with the principal entrance, gave directly upon the street. Perhaps in time past it was a tolerably lonely road, and indeed this theory looks all the more probable when one comes to think of it; for not so very far away, on this same road, Louis Quinze built a delicious summer villa for Mlle. de Romans, and the curious in such things will discover that the wayside *casinos* are adorned in a style that recalls traditions of the ingenious taste displayed in debauchery by our ancestors who, with all the license laid to their charge, sought to invest it with secrecy and mystery.

One winter evening the family were by themselves in the lonely house. The servants had received permission to go to Versailles to celebrate the wedding of one of their number.

It was Christmas time, and the holiday makers, presuming upon the double festival, did not scruple to outstay their leave of absence; yet, as the General was well known to be a man of his word, the culprits felt some twinges of conscience as they danced on after the hour of return. The clocks struck eleven, and still there was no sign of the servants.

A deep silence prevailed over the countryside, broken only by the sound of the northeast wind whistling through the black branches, wailing about the house, dying in gusts along the corridors. The hard frost had purified the air, and held the earth in its grip; the roads gave back every sound with the hard metallic ring which always strikes us with a new surprise; the heavy footsteps of some belated reveller, or a cab returning to Paris, could be heard for a long distance with unwonted distinctness. Out in the courtyard a few dead leaves set a-dancing by some eddying gust found a voice for the night which fain had been silent. It was, in fact, one of those sharp, frosty evenings that wring barren expressions of pity from our selfish ease for wayfarers and the poor, and fills us with a luxurious sense of the comfort of the fireside.

But the family party in the salon at that hour gave not a thought to absent servants nor houseless folk, nor to the gracious charm with which a winter evening sparkles. No one played the philosopher out of season. Secure in the protection of an old soldier, women and children gave themselves up to the joys of home life, so delicious when there is no restraint upon feeling; and talk and play and glances are bright with frankness and affection.

The General sat, or, more properly speaking, lay buried, in the depths of a huge, high-back armchair by the hearth. The heaped-up fire burned scorching clear with the excessive cold of the night. The good father leaned his head slightly to one side against the back of the chair, in the indolence of perfect serenity and a glow of happiness. The languid, half-sleepy droop of his outstretched arms seemed to complete his

expression of placid content. He was watching his youngest, a boy of five or thereabout, who, half clad as he was, declined to allow his mother to undress him. The little one fled from the nightgown and cap with which he was threatened now and again, and stoutly declined to part with his embroidered collar, laughing when his mother called to him, for he saw that she too was laughing at this declaration of infant independence. The next step was to go back to a game of romps with his sister. She was as much a child as he, but more mischievous; and she was older by two years, and could speak distinctly already, whereas his inarticulate words and confused ideas were a puzzle even to his parents. Little Moïna's playfulness, somewhat coquettish already, provoked inextinguishable laughter, explosions of merriment which went off like fireworks for no apparent cause. As they tumbled about before the fire, unconcernedly displaying little plump bodies and delicate white contours, as the dark and golden curls mingled in a collision of rosy cheeks dimpled with childish glee, a father surely, a mother most certainly, must have understood those little souls, and seen the character and power of passion already developed for their eyes. As the cherubs frolicked about, struggling, rolling, and tumbling without fear of hurt on the soft carpet, its flowers looked pale beside the glowing white and red of their cheeks and the brilliant color of their shining eyes.

On the sofa by the fire, opposite the great armchair, the children's mother sat among a heap of scattered garments, with a little scarlet shoe in her hand. She seemed to have given herself up completely to the enjoyment of the moment; wavering discipline had relaxed into a sweet smile engraved upon her lips. At the age of six-and-thirty, or thereabout, she was a beautiful woman still, by reason of the rare perfection of the outlines of her face, and at this moment light and warmth and happiness filled it with preternatural brightness.

Again and again her eyes wandered from her children, and their tender gaze was turned upon her husband's grave

face; and now and again the eyes of husband and wife met with a silent exchange of happiness and thoughts from some inner depth.

The General's face was deeply bronzed, a stray lock of gray hair scored shadows on his forehead. The reckless courage of the battlefield could be read in the lines carved in his hollow cheeks, and gleams of rugged strength in the blue eyes; clearly the bit of red ribbon flaunting at his buttonhole had been paid for by hardship and toil. An inexpressible kindliness and frankness shone out of the strong, resolute face which reflected his children's merriment; the gray-haired captain found it not so very hard to become a child again. Is there not always a little love of children in the heart of a soldier who has seen enough of the seamy side of life to know something of the piteous limitations of strength and the privileges of weakness?

At a round table rather further away, in a circle of bright lamplight that dimmed the feebler illumination of the wax candles on the chimney-piece, sat a boy of thirteen, rapidly turning the pages of a thick volume which he was reading undisturbed by the shouts of the children. There was a boy's curiosity in his face. From his *lycéens* uniform he was evidently a schoolboy, and the book he was reading was the "Arabian Nights." Small wonder that he was deeply absorbed. He sat perfectly still in a meditative attitude, with his elbow on the table, and his hand propping his head —the white fingers contrasting strongly with the brown hair into which they were thrust. As he sat, with the light turned full upon his face, and the rest of his body in shadow, he looked like one of Rafael's dark portraits of himself—a bent head and intent eyes filled with visions of the future.

Between the table and the Marquise a tall, beautiful girl sat at her tapestry frame; sometimes she drew back from her work, sometimes she bent over it, and her hair, picturesque in its ebony smoothness and darkness, caught the light of the lamp. Hélène was a picture in herself. In her

beauty there was a rare distinctive character of power and refinement. Though her hair was gathered up and drawn back from her face, so as to trace a clearly marked line about her head, so thick and abundant was it, so recalcitrant to the comb, that it sprang back in curl-tendrils to the nape of her neck. The bountiful line of eyebrows was evenly marked out in dark contrasting outline upon her pure forehead. On her upper lip, beneath the Grecian nose with its sensitively perfect curve of nostril, there lay a faint, swarthy shadow, the sign manual of courage; but the enchanting roundness of contour, the frankly innocent expression of her other features, the transparence of the delicate carnations, the voluptuous softness of the lips, the flawless oval of the outline of the face, and with these, and more than all these, the saintlike expression in the girlish eyes, gave to her vigorous loveliness the distinctive touch of feminine grace, that enchanting modesty which we look for in these angels of peace and love. Yet there was no suggestion of fragility about her; and, surely, with so grand a woman's frame, so attractive a face, she must possess a corresponding warmth of heart and strength of soul.

She was as silent as her schoolboy brother. Seemingly a prey to the fateful maiden meditations which baffle a father's penetration and even a mother's sagacity, it was impossible to be certain whether it was the lamplight that cast those shadows that flitted over her face like thin clouds over a bright sky, or whether they were passing shades of secret and painful thoughts.

Husband and wife had quite forgotten the two older children at that moment, though now and again the General's questioning glance travelled to that second mute picture; a larger growth, a gracious realization, as it were, of the hopes embodied in the baby forms rioting in the foreground. Their faces made up a kind of living poem, illustrating life's various phases. The luxurious background of the salon, the different attitudes, the strong contrasts of coloring in the faces, differing with the character of differing ages,

the modelling of the forms brought into high relief by the light—altogether it was a page of human life, richly illuminated beyond the art of painter, sculptor, or poet. Silence, solitude, night, and winter lent a final touch of majesty to complete the simplicity and sublimity of this exquisite effect of nature's contriving. Married life is full of these sacred hours, which perhaps owe their indefinable charm to some vague memory of a better world. A divine radiance surely shines upon them, the destined compensation for some portion of earth's sorrows, the solace which enables man to accept life. We seem to behold a vision of an enchanted universe, the great conception of its system widens out before our eyes, and social life pleads for its laws by bidding us look to the future.

Yet in spite of the tender glances that Hélène gave Abel and Moina after a fresh outburst of merriment; in spite of the look of gladness in her transparent face whenever she stole a glance at her father, a deep melancholy pervaded her gestures, her attitude, and, more than all, her eyes veiled by their long lashes. Those white, strong hands, through which the light passed, tinting them with a diaphanous almost fluid red—those hands were trembling. Once only did the eye of the mother and daughter clash without shrinking, and the two women read each other's thoughts in a look, cold, wan, and respectful on Hélène's part, sombre and threatening on her mother's. At once Hélène's eyes were lowered to her work, she plied her needle swiftly, and it was long before she raised her head, bowed as it seemed by a weight of thought too heavy to bear. Was the Marquise over harsh with this one of her children? Did she think this harshness needful? Was she jealous of Hélène's beauty?—She might still hope to rival Hélène, but only by the magic arts of the toilet. Or again, had her daughter, like many a girl who reaches the clairvoyant age, read the secrets which this wife (to all appearance so religiously faithful in the fulfilment of her duties) believed to be buried in her own heart as deeply as in a grave?

Hélène had reached an age when purity of soul inclines to pass over-rigid judgments. A certain order of mind is apt to exaggerate transgression into crime; imagination reacts upon conscience, and a young girl is a hard judge because she magnifies the seriousness of the offence. Hélène seemed to think herself worthy of no one. Perhaps there was a secret in her past life, perhaps something had happened, unintelligible to her at the time, but with gradually developing significance for a mind grown susceptible to religious influences; something which lately seemed to have degraded her, as it were, in her own eyes, and according to her own romantic standard. This change in her demeanor dated from the day of reading Schiller's noble tragedy of "Wilhelm Tell" in a new series of translations. Her mother scolded her for letting the book fall, and then remarked to herself that the passage which had so worked on Hélène's feelings was the scene in which Wilhelm Tell, who spilled the blood of a tyrant to save a nation, fraternizes in some sort with John the Parricide. Hélène had grown humble, dutiful, and self-contained; she no longer cared for gayety. Never had she made so much of her father, especially when the Marquise was not by to watch her girlish caresses. And yet, if Hélène's affection for her mother had cooled at all, the change in her manner was so slight as to be almost imperceptible; so slight that the General could not have noticed it, jealous though he might be of the harmony of home.

No masculine insight could have sounded the depths of those two feminine natures; the one was young and generous, the other sensitive and proud; the first had a wealth of indulgence in her nature, the second was full of craft and love. If the Marquise made her daughter's life a burden to her by a woman's subtle tyranny, it was a tyranny invisible to all but the victim; and for the rest, these conjectures only called forth after the event must remain conjectures. Until this night no accusing flash of light had escaped either of them, but an ominous mystery was too surely growing up

between them, a mystery known only to themselves and God.

"Come, Abel," called the Marquise, seizing on her opportunity when the children were tired of play and still for a moment. "Come, come, child; you must be put to bed—"

And with a glance that must be obeyed, she caught him up and took him on her knee.

"What!" exclaimed the General. "Half past ten o'clock, and not one of the servants has come back! The rascals!—Gustave," he added, turning to his son, "I allowed you to read that book only on the condition that you should put it away at ten o'clock. You ought to have shut up the book at the proper time and gone to bed, as you promised. If you mean to make your mark in the world, you must keep your word; let it be a second religion to you and a point of honor. Fox, one of the greatest of English orators, was remarkable, above all things, for the beauty of his character, and the very first of his qualities was the scrupulous faithfulness with which he kept his engagements. When he was a child, his father (an Englishman of the old school) gave him a pretty strong lesson which he never forgot. Like most rich Englishmen, Fox's father had a country house and a considerable park about it. Now, in the park there was an old summer-house, and orders had been given that this summer-house was to be pulled down and put up somewhere else where there was a finer view. Fox was just about your age, and had come home for the holidays. Boys are fond of seeing things pulled to pieces, so young Fox asked to stay on at home for a few days longer to see the old summer-house taken down; but his father said that he must go back to school on the proper day, so there was anger between father and son. Fox's mother (like all mammas) took the boy's part. Then the father solemnly promised that the summer-house should stay where it was till the next holidays.

"So Fox went back to school; and his father, thinking

that lessons would soon drive the whole thing out of the boy's mind, had the summer-house pulled down and put up in the new position. But, as it happened, the persistent youngster thought of nothing but that summer-house; and as soon as he came home again, his first care was to go out to look at the old building, and he came in to breakfast looking quite doleful, and said to his father, 'You have broken your promise.' The old English gentleman said with confusion full of dignity, 'That is true, my boy; but I will make amends. A man ought to think of keeping his word before he thinks of his fortune; for by keeping to his word he will gain fortune, while all the fortunes in the world will not efface the stain left on your conscience by a breach of faith.' Then he gave orders that the summer-house should be put up again in the old place, and when it had been rebuilt he had it taken down again for his son to see. Let this be a lesson to *you*, Gustave."

Gustave had been listening with interest, and now he closed the book at once. There was a moment's silence, while the General took possession of Moina, who could scarcely keep her eyes open. The little one's languid head fell back on her father's breast, and in a moment she was fast asleep, wrapped round about in her golden curls.

Just then a sound of hurrying footsteps rang on the pavement out in the street, immediately followed by three knocks on the street door, waking the echoes of the house. The reverberating blows told, as plainly as a cry for help, that here was a man flying for his life. The house dog barked furiously. A thrill of excitement ran through Hélène and Gustave and the General and his wife; but neither Abel, with the night cap strings just tied under his chin, nor Moina awoke.

"The fellow is in a hurry!" exclaimed the General. He put the little girl down on the chair, and hastened out of the room, heedless of his wife's entreating cry, "Dear, do not go down—"

He stepped into his own room for a pair of pistols,

lighted a dark lantern, sprang at lightning speed down the staircase, and in another minute reached the house door, his oldest boy fearlessly following.

"Who is there?" demanded he.

"Let me in," panted a breathless voice.

"Are you a friend?"

"Yes, friend."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes! But let me in; *they* are after me!"

The General had scarcely set the door ajar before a man slipped into the porch with the uncanny swiftness of a shadow. Before the master of the house could prevent him, the intruder had closed the door with a well-directed kick, and set his back against it resolutely, as if he were determined that it should not be opened again. In a moment the General had his lantern and pistol at a level with the stranger's breast, and beheld a man of medium height in a fur-lined pelisse. It was an old man's garment, both too large and too long for its present wearer. Chance or caution had slouched the man's hat over his eyes.

"You can lower your pistol, sir," said this person. "I do not claim to stay in your house against your will; but if I leave it, death is waiting for me at the barrier. And what a death! You would be answerable to God for it! I ask for your hospitality for two hours. And bear this in mind, sir, that, suppliant as I am, I have a right to command with the despotism of necessity. I want the Arab's hospitality. Either I and my secret must be inviolable, or open the door and I will go to my death. I want secrecy, a safe hiding-place, and water. Oh! water!" he cried again, with a rattle in his throat.

"Who are you?" demanded the General, taken aback by the stranger's feverish volubility.

"Ah! who am I? Good, open the door, and I will put a distance between us," retorted the other, and there was a diabolical irony in his tone.

Dexterously as the Marquis passed the light of the lan-

tern over the man's face, he could only see the lower half of it, and that in nowise prepossessed him in favor of this singular claimant of hospitality. The cheeks were livid and quivering, the features dreadfully contorted. Under the shadow of the hat-brim a pair of eyes gleamed out like flames; the feeble candle-light looked almost dim in comparison. Some sort of answer must be made, however.

"Your language, sir, is so extraordinary that in my place you yourself—"

"My life is in your hands!" the intruder broke in. The sound of his voice was dreadful to hear.

"Two hours?" said the Marquis, wavering.

"Two hours," echoed the other.

Then quite suddenly, with a desperate gesture, he pushed back his hat and left his forehead bare, and, as if he meant to try a final expedient, he gave the General a glance that seemed to plunge like a vivid flash into his very soul. That electrical discharge of intelligence and will was swift as lightning and crushing as a thunderbolt; for there are moments when a human being is invested for a brief space with inexplicable power.

"Come, whoever you may be, you shall be in safety under my roof," the master of the house said gravely at last, acting, as he imagined, upon one of those intuitions which a man cannot always explain to himself.

"God will repay you!" said the stranger, with a deep, involuntary sigh.

"Have you weapons?" asked the General.

For all answer the stranger flung open his fur pelisse, and scarcely gave the other time for a glance before he wrapped it about him again. To all appearance he was unarmed and in evening dress. Swift as the soldier's scrutiny had been, he saw something, however, which made him exclaim: "Where the devil have you been to get yourself in such a mess in such dry weather?"

"More questions!" said the stranger haughtily.

At the words the Marquis caught sight of his son, and

his own late homily on the strict fulfilment of a given word came up in his mind. In lively vexation, he exclaimed, not without a touch of anger: "What! little rogue, you here when you ought to be in bed?"

"Because I thought I might be of some good in danger," answered Gustave.

"There, go up to your room," said his father, mollified by the reply.—"And you" (addressing the stranger), "come with me."

The two men grew as silent as a pair of gamblers who watch each other's play with mutual suspicions. The General himself began to be troubled with ugly presentiments. The strange visit weighed upon his mind already like a nightmare; but he had passed his word, there was no help for it now, and he led the way along the passages and stairways till they reached a large room on the second floor immediately above the salon. This was an empty room where linen was dried in the winter. It had but the one door, and for all decoration boasted one solitary shabby looking-glass above the chimney-piece, left by the previous owner, and a great pier glass, placed provisionally opposite the fireplace until such time as a use should be found for it in the rooms below. The four yellowish walls were bare. The floor had never been swept. The huge attic was icy-cold, and the furniture consisted of a couple of rickety straw-bottomed chairs, or rather frames of chairs. The General set the lantern down upon the chimney-piece. Then he spoke: "It is necessary for your own safety to hide you in this comfortless attic. And, as you have my promise to keep your secret, you will permit me to lock you in."

The other bent his head in acquiescence.

"I asked for nothing but a hiding-place, secrecy, and water," returned he.

"I will bring you some directly," said the Marquis, shutting the door cautiously. He groped his way down into the salon for a lamp before going to the kitchen to look for a carafe.

"Well, what is it?" the Marquise asked quickly.

"Nothing, dear," he returned coolly.

"But we listened, and we certainly heard you go upstairs with somebody."

"Hélène," said the General, and he looked at his daughter, who raised her face, "bear in mind that your father's honor depends upon your discretion. You must have heard nothing."

The girl bent her head in answer. The Marquise was confused and smarting inwardly at the way in which her husband had thought fit to silence her.

Meanwhile the General went for the bottle and a tumbler, and returned to the room above. His prisoner was leaning against the chimney-piece, his head was bare, he had flung down his hat on one of the two chairs. Evidently he had not expected to have so bright a light turned upon him, and he frowned and looked anxious as he met the General's keen eyes; but his face softened and wore a gracious expression as he thanked his protector. When the latter placed the bottle and glass on the mantel-shelf, the stranger's eyes flashed out on him again; and when he spoke, it was in musical tones, with no sign of the previous guttural convulsion, though his voice was still unsteady with repressed emotion.

"I shall seem to you to be a strange being, sir, but you must pardon the caprices of necessity. If you propose to remain in the room, I beg that you will not look at me while I am drinking."

Vexed at this continual obedience to a man whom he disliked, the General sharply turned his back upon him. The stranger thereupon drew a white handkerchief from his pocket and wound it about his right hand. Then he seized the carafe and emptied it at a draught. The Marquis, staring vacantly into the tall mirror across the room, without a thought of breaking his implicit promise, saw the stranger's figure distinctly reflected by the opposite looking-glass, and saw, too, a red stain suddenly appear through the

folds of the white bandage—the man's hands were steeped in blood.

"Ah! you saw me!" cried the other. He had drunk off the water and wrapped himself again in his cloak, and now scrutinized the General suspiciously. "It is all over with me! Here they come!"

"I don't hear anything," said the Marquis.

"You have not the same interest that I have in listening for sounds in the air."

"You have been fighting a duel, I suppose, to be in such a state?" queried the General, not a little disturbed by the color of those broad, dark patches staining his visitor's cloak.

"Yes, a duel; you have it," said the other, and a bitter smile flitted over his lips.

As he spoke a sound rang along the distant road, a sound of galloping horses; but so faint as yet that it was the merest dawn of a sound. The General's trained ear recognized the advance of a troop of regulars.

"That is the gendarmerie," said he.

He glanced at his prisoner to reassure him after his own involuntary indiscretion, took the lamp, and went down to the salon. He had scarcely laid the key of the room above upon the chimney-piece when the hoof beats sounded louder, and came swiftly nearer and nearer the house. The General felt a shiver of excitement, and indeed the horses stopped at the house door; a few words were exchanged among the men, and one of them dismounted and knocked loudly. There was no help for it; the General went to open the door. He could scarcely conceal his inward perturbation at the sight of half a dozen gendarmes outside, the metal rims of their caps gleaming like silver in the moonlight.

"My lord," said the corporal, "have you heard a man run past toward the barrier within the last few minutes?"

"Toward the barrier? No."

"Have you opened the door to any one?"

"Now, am I in the habit of answering the door myself—?"

"I ask your pardon, General, but just now it seems to me that—"

"Really!" cried the Marquis wrathfully. "Have you a mind to try joking with me? What right have you—?"

"None at all, none at all, my lord," cried the corporal, hastily putting in a soft answer. "You will excuse our zeal. We know, of course, that a peer of France is not likely to harbor a murderer at this time of night; but as we want any information we can get—"

"A murderer!" cried the General. "Who can have been—"

"M. le Baron de Mauny has just been murdered. It was a blow from an axe, and we are in hot pursuit of the criminal. We know for certain that he is somewhere in this neighborhood, and we shall hunt him down. By your leave, General," and the man swung himself into the saddle as he spoke. It was well that he did so, for a corporal of gendarmerie trained to alert observation and quick surmise would have had his suspicions at once if he had caught sight of the General's face. Everything that passed through the soldier's mind was faithfully revealed in his frank countenance.

"Is it known who the murderer is?" asked he.

"No," said the other, now in the saddle. "He left the bureau full of banknotes and gold untouched."

"It was revenge, then," said the Marquis.

"On an old man? pshaw! No, no, the fellow hadn't time to take it, that was all," and the corporal galloped after his comrades, who were almost out of sight by this time.

For a few minutes the General stood, a victim to perplexities which need no explanation; but in a moment he heard the servants returning home, their voices were raised in some sort of dispute at the cross roads of Montreuil. When they came in, he gave vent to his feelings in an explosion of rage, his wrath fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and all the echoes of the house trembled at the sound of his voice. In the midst of the storm his own man, the boldest

and cleverest of the party, brought out an excuse; they had been stopped, he said, by the gendarmerie at the gate of Montreuil, a murder had been committed, and the police were in pursuit. In a moment the General's anger vanished, he said not another word; then, bethinking himself of his own singular position, dryly ordered them all off to bed at once, and left them amazed at his readiness to accept their fellow-servant's lying excuse.

While these incidents took place in the yard, an apparently trifling occurrence had changed the relative positions of three characters in this story. The Marquis had scarcely left the room before his wife looked first toward the key on the mantel-shelf, and then at Hélène; and, after some wavering, bent toward her daughter and said in a low voice, "Hélène, your father has left the key on the chimney-piece."

The girl looked up in surprise and glanced timidly at her mother. The Marquise's eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"Well, mamma?" she said, and her voice had a troubled ring.

"I should like to know what is going on upstairs. If there is anybody up there, he has not stirred yet. Just go up—"

"*I?*" cried the girl, with something like horror in her tones.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, mamma, but I thought I heard a man's footsteps."

"If I could go myself, I should not have asked you to go, Hélène," said her mother with cold dignity. "If your father were to come back and did not see me, he would go to look for me perhaps, but he would not notice your absence."

"Madame, if you bid me go, I will go," said Hélène, "but I shall lose my father's good opinion—"

"What is this!" cried the Marquise in a sarcastic tone. "But since you take a thing that was said in joke in earnest, I now *order* you to go upstairs and see who it is in the room above. Here is the key, child. When your father

told you to say nothing about this thing that happened, he did not forbid you to go up to the room. Go at once—and learn that a daughter ought never to judge her mother."

The last words were spoken with all the severity of a justly offended mother. The Marquise took the key and handed it to Hélène, who rose without a word and left the room.

"My mother can always easily obtain her pardon," thought the girl; "but as for me, my father will never think the same of me again. Does she mean to rob me of his tenderness? Does she want to turn me out of his house?"

These were the thoughts that set her imagination in a sudden ferment, as she went down the dark passage to the mysterious door at the end. When she stood before it, her mental confusion grew to a fateful pitch. Feelings hitherto forced down into inner depths crowded up at the summons of these confused thoughts. Perhaps hitherto she had never believed that a happy life lay before her, but now, in this awful moment, her despair was complete. She shook convulsively as she set the key in the lock; so great indeed was her agitation that she stopped for a moment and laid her hand on her heart, as if to still the heavy throbs that sounded in her ears. Then she opened the door.

The creaking of the hinges sounded doubtless in vain on the murderer's ears. Acute as were his powers of hearing, he stood as if lost in thought, and so motionless that he might have been glued to the wall against which he leaned. In the circle of semi-opaque darkness, dimly lighted by the bull's-eye lantern, he looked like the shadowy figure of some dead knight, standing forever in his shadowy mortuary niche in the gloom of some Gothic chapel. Drops of cold sweat trickled over the broad, sallow forehead. An incredible fearlessness looked out from every tense feature. His eyes of fire were fixed and tearless; he seemed to be watching some struggle in the darkness beyond him. Stormy thoughts passed swiftly across a face whose firm decision

spoke of a character of no common order. His whole person, bearing, and frame bore out the impression of a tameless spirit. The man looked power and strength personified; he stood facing the darkness as if it were the visible image of his own future.

These physical characteristics had made no impression upon the General, familiar as he was with the powerful faces of the group of giants gathered about Napoleon; speculative curiosity, moreover, as to the why and wherefore of the apparition had completely filled his mind; but Hélène, with feminine sensitiveness to surface impressions, was struck by the blended chaos of light and darkness, grandeur and passion, suggesting a likeness between this stranger and Lucifer recovering from his fall. Suddenly the storm apparent in his face was stilled as if by magic; and the indefinable power to sway which the stranger exercised upon others, and perhaps unconsciously and as by reflex action upon himself, spread its influence about him with the progressive swiftness of a flood. A torrent of thought rolled away from his brow as his face resumed its ordinary expression. Perhaps it was the strangeness of this meeting, or perhaps it was the mystery into which she had penetrated, that held the young girl spellbound in the doorway, so that she could look at a face pleasant to behold and full of interest. For some moments she stood in the magical silence; a trouble had come upon her never known before in her young life. Perhaps some exclamation broke from Hélène, perhaps she moved unconsciously; or it may be that the hunted criminal returned of his own accord from the world of ideas to the material world, and heard some one breathing in the room; however it was, he turned his head toward his host's daughter, and saw dimly in the shadow a noble face and queenly form, which he must have taken for an angel's, so motionless she stood, so vague and like a spirit.

"Monsieur . . ." a trembling voice cried.

The murderer trembled.

"A woman!" he cried under his breath. "*Is* it possible? Go," he cried, "I deny that any one has a right to pity, to absolve, or condemn me. I must live alone. Go, my child," he added, with an imperious gesture, "I should ill requite the service done me by the master of the house if I were to allow a single creature under his roof to breathe the same air with me. I must submit to be judged by the laws of the world."

The last words were uttered in a lower voice. Even as he realized with a profound intuition all the manifold misery awakened by that melancholy thought, the glance that he gave Hélène had something of the power of the serpent, stirring a whole dormant world in the mind of the strange girl before him. To her that glance was like a light revealing unknown lands. She was stricken with strange trouble, helpless, quelled by a magnetic power exerted unconsciously. Trembling and ashamed, she went out and returned to the salon. She had scarcely entered the room before her father came back, so that she had not time to say a word to her mother.

The General was wholly absorbed in thought. He folded his arms, and paced silently to and fro between the windows which looked out upon the street and the second row which gave upon the garden. His wife held the sleeping Abel on her knee, and little Moina lay in untroubled slumber in the low chair, like a bird in its nest. Her older sister stared into the fire, a skein of silk in one hand, a needle in the other.

Deep silence prevailed, broken only by lagging footsteps on the stairs, as one by one the servants crept away to bed; there was an occasional burst of stifled laughter, a last echo of the wedding festivity, or doors were opened as they still talked among themselves, then shut. A smothered sound came now and again from the bedrooms, a chair fell, the old coachman coughed feebly, then all was silent.

In a little while the dark majesty with which sleeping earth is invested at midnight brought all things under its sway. No lights shone but the light of the stars. The

frost gripped the ground. There was not a sound of a voice, nor a living creature stirring. The crackling of the fire only seemed to make the depth of the silence more fully felt.

The church clock of Montreuil had just struck one, when an almost inaudible sound of a light footstep came from the second flight of stairs. The Marquis and his daughter, both believing that M. de Mauny's murderer was a prisoner above, thought that one of the maids had come down, and no one was at all surprised to hear the door open in the antechamber. Quite suddenly the murderer appeared in their midst. The Marquis himself was sunk in deep musings, the mother and daughter were silent, the one from keen curiosity, the other from sheer astonishment, so that the visitor was almost half-way across the room when he spoke to the General.

"Sir, the two hours are almost over," he said, in a voice that was strangely calm and musical.

"*You here!*" cried the General. "By what means—?" and he gave wife and daughter a formidable questioning glance. Hélène grew red as fire.

"You!" he went on, in a tone filled with horror. "*You* among us! A murderer covered with blood! You are a blot on this picture! Go, go out!" he added in a burst of rage.

At that word "murderer," the Marquise cried out; as for Hélène, it seemed to mark an epoch in her life, there was not a trace of surprise in her face. She looked as if she had been waiting for this—or him. Those so vast thoughts of hers had found a meaning. The punishment reserved by Heaven for her sins flamed out before her. In her own eyes she was as great a criminal as this murderer; she confronted him with her quiet gaze; she was his fellow, his sister. It seemed to her that in this accident the command of God had been made manifest. If she had been a few years older, reason would have disposed of her remorse, but at this moment she was like one distraught.

The stranger stood impassive and self-possessed; a scornful smile overspread his features and his thick, red lips.

"You appreciate the magnanimity of my behavior very badly," he said slowly. "I would not touch with my fingers the glass of water you brought me to allay my thirst; I did not so much as think of washing my blood-stained hands under your roof; I am going away, leaving nothing of *my crime*" (here his lips were compressed) "but the memory; I have tried to leave no trace of my presence in this house. Indeed, I would not even allow your daughter to—"

"*My daughter!*" cried the General, with a horror stricken glance at Hélène. "Vile wretch, go, or I will kill you—"

"The two hours are not yet over," said the other; "if you kill me or give me up, you must lower yourself in your own eyes—and in mine."

At these last words, the General turned to stare at the criminal in dumb amazement; but he could not endure the intolerable light in those eyes which for the second time disorganized his being. He was afraid of showing weakness once more, conscious as he was that his will was weaker already.

"An old man! You can never have seen a family," he said, with a father's glance at his wife and children.

"Yes, an old man," echoed the stranger, frowning slightly.

"Fly!" cried the General, but he did not dare to look at his guest. "Our compact is broken. I shall not kill you. No! I will never be purveyor to the scaffold. But go out. You make us shudder."

"I know that," said the other patiently. "There is not a spot on French soil where I can set foot and be safe; but if man's justice, like God's, took all into account, if man's justice deigned to inquire which was the monster—the murderer or his victim—then I might hold up my head among my fellows. Can you not guess that other crimes preceded that blow from an axe? I constituted myself his judge and executioner; I stepped in where man's justice failed. That was my crime. Farewell, sir. Bitter though you have made

your hospitality, I shall not forget it. I shall always bear in my heart a feeling of gratitude toward one man in the world, and you are that man. . . . But I could wish that you had showed yourself more generous!"

He turned toward the door, but in the same instant Hélène leaned to whisper something in her mother's ear.

"Ah! . . ."

At the cry that broke from his wife, the General trembled as if he had seen Moina lying dead. There stood Hélène, and the murderer had turned instinctively, with something like anxiety about these folk in his face.

"What is it, dear?" asked the General.

"Hélène wants to go with him."

The murderer's face flushed.

"If that is how my mother understands an almost involuntary exclamation," Hélène said in a low voice, "I will fulfil her wishes." She glanced about her with something like fierce pride; then the girl's eyes fell, and she stood, admirable in her modesty.

"Hélène, did you go up to the room where—?"

"Yes, father."

"Hélène" (and his voice shook with a convulsive tremor), "is this the first time that you have seen this man?"

"Yes, father."

"Then it is not natural that you should intend to—"

"If it is not natural, father, at any rate it is true."

"Oh! child," said the Marquise, lowering her voice, but not so much but that her husband could hear her, "you are false to all the principles of honor, modesty, and right which I have tried to cultivate in your heart. If until this fatal hour your life has only been one lie, there is nothing to regret in your loss. It can hardly be the moral perfection of this stranger that attracts you to him? Can it be the kind of power that commits crime? I have too good an opinion of you to suppose that—"

"Oh, suppose everything, madame," Hélène said coldly.

But though her force of character sustained this ordeal,

her flashing eyes could scarcely hold the tears that filled them. The stranger, watching her, guessed the mother's language from the girl's tears, and turned his eagle glance upon the Marquise. An irresistible power constrained her to look at this terrible seducer; but as her eyes met his bright, glittering gaze, she felt a shiver run through her frame, such a shock as we feel at the sight of a reptile or the contact of a Leyden jar.

"Dear!" she cried, turning to her husband, "this is the Fiend himself! He can divine everything!"

The General rose to his feet and went to the bell.

"He means ruin for you," Hélène said to the murderer.

The stranger smiled, took one forward stride, grasped the General's arm, and compelled him to endure a steady gaze which benumbed the soldier's brain and left him powerless.

"I will repay you now for your hospitality," he said, "and then we shall be quits. I will spare you the shame by giving myself up. After all, what should I do now with my life?"

"You could repent," answered Hélène, and her glance conveyed such hope as only glows in a young girl's eyes.

"*I shall never repent*," said the murderer in a sonorous voice, as he raised his head proudly.

"His hands are stained with blood," the father said.

"I will wipe it away," she answered.

"But do you so much as know whether he cares for you?" said her father, not daring now to look at the stranger.

The murderer came up a little nearer. Some light within seemed to glow through Hélène's beauty, grave and maidenly though it was, coloring and bringing into relief, as it were, the least details, the most delicate lines in her face. The stranger, with that terrible fire still blazing in his eyes, gave one tender glance to her enchanting loveliness, then he spoke, his tones revealing how deeply he had been moved.

"And if I refuse to allow this sacrifice of yourself, and

so discharge my debt of two hours of existence to your father; is not this love, love for yourself alone?''

''Then do you too reject me?'' Hélène's cry rang painfully through the hearts of all who heard her. ''Farewell, then, to you all; I will die.''

''What does this mean?'' asked the father and mother.

Hélène gave her mother an eloquent glance and lowered her eyes.

Since the first attempt made by the General and his wife to contest by word or action the intruder's strange presumption to the right of staying in their midst, from their first experience of the power of those glittering eyes, a mysterious torpor had crept over them, and their benumbed faculties struggled in vain with a preternatural influence. The air seemed to have suddenly grown so heavy that they could scarcely breathe; yet, while they could not find the reason of this feeling of oppression, a voice within told them that this magnetic presence was the real cause of their helplessness. In this moral agony, it flashed across the General that he must make every effort to overcome this influence on his daughter's reeling brain; he caught her by the waist and drew her into the embrasure of a window, as far as possible from the murderer.

''Darling,'' he murmured, ''if some wild love has been suddenly born in your heart, I cannot believe that you have not the strength of soul to quell the mad impulse; your innocent life, your pure and dutiful soul, has given me too many proofs of your character. There must be something behind all this. Well, this heart of mine is full of indulgence, you can tell everything to me; even if it breaks, dear child, I can be silent about my grief, and keep your confession a secret. What is it? Are you jealous of our love for your brothers or your little sister? Is it some love trouble? Are you unhappy here at home? Tell me about it, tell me the reasons that urge you to leave your home, to rob it of its greatest charm, to leave your mother and brothers and your little sister?'

"I am in love with no one, father, and jealous of no one, not even of your friend the diplomatist, M. de Vandenesse."

The Marquise turned pale; her daughter saw this, and stopped short.

"Sooner or later I must live under some man's protection, must I not?"

"That is true."

"Do we ever know," she went on, "the human being to whom we link our destinies? Now, I believe in this man."

"Oh, child," said the General, raising his voice, "you have no idea of all the misery that lies in store for you."

"I am thinking of *his*."

"What a life!" groaned the father.

"A woman's life," the girl murmured.

"You have a great knowledge of life!" exclaimed the Marquise, finding speech at last.

"Madame, my answers are shaped by the questions; but if you desire it, I will speak more clearly."

"Speak out, my child . . . I am a mother."

Mother and daughter looked each other in the face, and the Marquise said no more. At last she said:

"Hélène, if you have any reproaches to make, I would rather bear them than see you go away with a man from whom the whole world shrinks in horror."

"Then you see yourself, madame, that but for me he would be quite alone."

"That will do, madame," the General cried; "we have but one daughter left to us now," and he looked at Moina, who slept on. "As for you," he added, turning to Hélène, "I will put you in a convent."

"So be it, father," she said, in calm despair, "I shall die there. You are answerable to God alone for my life and for *his* soul."

A deep, sudden silence fell after those words. The onlookers during this strange scene, so utterly at variance with all the sentiments of ordinary life, shunned each other's eyes.

Suddenly the Marquis happened to glance at his pistols. He caught up one of them, cocked the weapon, and pointed it at the intruder. At the click of firearms the other turned his piercing gaze full upon the General; the soldier's arm slackened indescribably and fell heavily to his side. The pistol dropped to the floor.

"Girl, you are free," said he, exhausted by this ghastly struggle. "Kiss your mother, if she will let you kiss her. For my own part, I wish never to see nor to hear of you again."

"Hélène," the mother began, "only think of the wretched life before you."

A sort of rattling sound came from the intruder's deep chest, all eyes turned to him. Disdain was plainly visible in his face.

The General rose to his feet. "My hospitality has cost me dear," he cried. "Before you came you had taken an old man's life; now you are dealing a deadly blow at a whole family. Whatever happens, there must be unhappiness in this house."

"And if your daughter is happy?" asked the other, gazing steadily at the General.

The father made a superhuman effort for self-control. "If she is happy with you," he said, "she is not worth regretting."

Hélène knelt timidly before her father.

"Father, I love and revere you," she said, "whether you lavish all the treasures of your kindness upon me, or make me feel to the full the rigor of disgrace. . . . But I entreat that your last words of farewell shall not be words of anger."

The General could not trust himself to look at her. The stranger came nearer; there was something half-diabolical, half-divine in the smile that he gave Hélène.

"Angel of pity, you that do not shrink in horror from a murderer, come, since you persist in your resolution of intrusting your life to me."

"Inconceivable!" cried her father.

The Marquise looked strangely at her daughter, opened her arms, and Hélène fled to her in tears.

"Farewell," she said, "farewell, mother!" The stranger trembled as Hélène, undaunted, made sign to him that she was ready. She kissed her father's hand; and, as if performing a duty, gave a hasty kiss to Moina and little Abel, then she vanished with the murderer.

"Which way are they going?" exclaimed the General, listening to the footsteps of the two fugitives.—"Madame," he turned to his wife, "I think I must be dreaming: there is some mystery behind all this, I do not understand it; you must know what it means."

The Marquise shivered.

"For some time past your daughter has grown extraordinarily romantic and strangely high-flown in her ideas. In spite of the pains I have taken to combat these tendencies in her character—"

"This will not do—" began the General, but fancying that he heard footsteps in the garden, he broke off to fling open the window.

"Hélène!" he shouted.

His voice was lost in the darkness like a vain prophecy. The utterance of that name, to which there should never be answer any more, acted like a counter-spell; it broke the charm and set him free from the evil enchantment which lay upon him. It was as if some spirit passed over his face. He now saw clearly what had taken place, and cursed his incomprehensible weakness. A shiver of heat rushed from his heart to his head and feet; he became himself once more, terrible, thirsting for revenge. He raised a dreadful cry.

"Help!" he thundered, "help!"

He rushed to the bell-pull, pulled till the bells rang with a strange clamor of din, pulled till the cord gave way. The whole house was roused with a start. Still shouting, he flung open the windows that looked upon the street, called for the police, caught up his pistols, and fired them off to hurry the mounted patrols, the newly aroused servants, and

the neighbors. The dogs barked at the sound of their master's voice; the horses neighed and stamped in their stalls. The quiet night was suddenly filled with hideous uproar. The General on the staircase, in pursuit of his daughter, saw the scared faces of the servants flocking from all parts of the house.

"My daughter!" he shouted. "Hélène has been carried off. Search the garden! Keep a lookout on the road! Open the gates for the gendarmerie!—Murder! Help!"

With the strength of fury he snapped the chain and let loose the great house-dog.

"Hélène!" he cried, "Hélène!"

The dog sprang out like a lion, barking furiously, and dashed into the garden, leaving the General far behind. A troop of horses came along the road at a gallop, and he flew to open the gates himself.

"Corporal!" he shouted, "cut off the retreat of M. de Mauny's murderer. They have gone through my garden. Quick! Put a cordon of men to watch the ways by the Butte de Picardie.—I will beat up the grounds, parks, and houses.—The rest of you keep a lookout along the road," he ordered the servants, "form a chain between the barrier and Versailles. Forward, every man of you!"

He caught up the rifle which his man had brought out, and dashed into the garden.

"Find them!" he called to the dog.

An ominous baying came in answer from the distance, and he plunged in the direction from which the growl seemed to come.

It was seven o'clock in the morning; all the search made by gendarmes, servants, and neighbors had been fruitless, and the dog had not come back. The General entered the salon, empty now for him though the other three children were there; he was worn out with fatigue, and looked old already with that night's work.

"You have been very cold to your daughter," he said, turning his eyes on his wife.—"And now this is all that

is left to us of her," he added, indicating the embroidery frame, and the flower just begun. "Only just now she was there, and now she is lost . . . lost!"

Tears followed; he hid his face in his hands, and for a few minutes he said no more; he could not bear the sight of the room, which so short a time ago had made a setting to a picture of the sweetest family happiness. The winter-dawn was struggling with the dying lamplight; the tapers burned down to their paper-wreaths and flared out; everything was all in keeping with the father's despair.

"This must be destroyed," he said after a pause, pointing to the tambour-frame. "I shall never bear to see anything again that reminds us of *her!*"

The terrible Christmas night when the Marquis and his wife lost their oldest daughter, powerless to oppose the mysterious influence exercised by the man who involuntarily, as it were, stole Hélène from them, was like a warning sent by Fate. The Marquis was ruined by the failure of his stock-broker; he borrowed money on his wife's property, and lost it in the endeavor to retrieve his fortunes. Driven to desperate expedients, he left France. Six years went by. His family seldom had news of him; but a few days before Spain recognized the independence of the American Republics, he wrote that he was coming home.

So, one fine morning, it happened that several French merchants were on board a Spanish brig that lay a few leagues out from Bordeaux, impatient to reach their native land again, with wealth acquired by long years of toil and perilous adventures in Venezuela and Mexico.

One of the passengers, a man who looked aged by trouble rather than by years, was leaning against the bulwark netting, apparently quite unaffected by the sight to be seen from the upper deck. The bright day, the sense that the voyage was safely over, had brought all the passengers above to greet their land. The larger number of them insisted that they could see, far off in the distance, the houses and light-houses on the coast of Gascony and the Tower of Cordouan,

melting into the fantastic erections of white cloud along the horizon. But for the silver fringe that played about their bows, and the long furrow swiftly effaced in their wake, they might have been perfectly still in mid-ocean, so calm was the sea. The sky was magically clear, the dark blue of the vault above paled by imperceptible gradations, until it blended with the bluish water, a gleaming line that sparkled like stars marking the dividing line of sea. The sunlight caught myriads of facets over the wide surface of the ocean, in such a sort that the vast plains of salt water looked perhaps more full of light than the fields of sky.

The brig had set all her canvas. The snowy sails, swelled by the strangely soft wind, the labyrinth of cordage, and the yellow flags flying at the masthead, all stood out sharp and uncompromisingly clear against the vivid background of space, sky, and sea; there was nothing to alter the color but the shadow cast by the great cloudlike sails.

A glorious day, a fair wind, and the fatherland in sight, a sea like a millpond, the melancholy sound of the ripples, a fair solitary vessel, gliding across the surface of the water like a woman stealing out to a tryst—it was a picture full of harmony. That mere speck full of movement was a starting-point whence the soul of man could descry the immutable vast of space. Solitude and bustling life, silence and sound, were all brought together in strange abrupt contrast; you could not tell where life, or sound, or silence, and nothingness lay, and no human voice broke the divine spell.

The Spanish captain, the crew, and the French passengers sat or stood, in a mood of devout ecstasy, in which many memories blended. There was idleness in the air. The beaming faces told of complete forgetfulness of past hardships, the men were rocked on the fair vessel as in a golden dream. Yet, from time to time the elderly passenger, leaning over the bulwark nettings, looked with something like uneasiness at the horizon. Distrust of the ways of Fate could be read in his whole face; he seemed to fear that he should not reach the coast of France in time. This was the

Marquis. Fortune had not been deaf to his despairing cry and struggles. After five years of endeavor and painful toil, he was a wealthy man once more. In his impatience to reach his home again and to bring the good news to his family, he had followed the example set by some French merchants in Havana, and embarked with them on a Spanish vessel with a cargo for Bordeaux. And now, grown tired of evil forebodings, his fancy was tracing out for him the most delicious pictures of past happiness. In that far-off brown line of land he seemed to see his wife and children. He sat in his place by the fireside; they were crowding about him; he felt their caresses. Moïna had grown to be a young girl; she was beautiful, and tall, and striking. The fancied picture had grown almost real, when the tears filled his eyes, and, to hide his emotion, he turned his face toward the sea-line, opposite the hazy streak that meant land.

"There she is again. . . . She is following us!" he said.

"What?" cried the Spanish captain.

"There is a vessel," muttered the General.

"I saw her yesterday," answered Captain Gomez. He looked at his interlocutor as if to ask what he thought; then he added, in the General's ear, "She has been chasing us all along."

"Then why she has not come up with us I do not know," said the General, "for she is a faster sailer than your damned 'Saint-Ferdinand.'"

"She will have damaged herself, sprung a leak—"

"She is gaining on us!" the General broke in.

"She is a Colombian privateer," the captain said in his ear, "and we are still six leagues from land, and the wind is dropping."

"She is not *going* ahead, she is flying, as if she knew that in two hours' time her prey would escape her. What audacity!"

"Audacity!" cried the captain. "Oh! she is not called the 'Othello' for nothing. Not so long back she sank a Spanish frigate that carried thirty guns! This is the one

thing I was afraid of, for I had a notion that she was cruising about somewhere off the Antilles.—Aha!" he added after a pause, as he watched the sails of his own vessel, "the wind is rising; we are making way. Get through we must, for 'the Parisian' will show us no mercy."

"She is making way too!" returned the General.

The "Othello" was scarce three leagues away by this time; and although the conversation between the Marquis and Captain Gomez had taken place apart, passengers and crew, attracted by the sudden appearance of a sail, came to that side of the vessel. With scarcely an exception, however, they took the privateer for a merchantman, and watched her course with interest, till all at once a sailor shouted with some energy of language: "By Saint James, it is all up with us! Yonder is the Parisian captain!"

At that terrible name dismay, and a panic impossible to describe, spread through the brig. The Spanish captain's orders put energy into the crew for a while; and in his resolute determination to make land at all costs, he set all the studding sails, and crowded on every stitch of canvas on board. But all this was not the work of a moment; and naturally the men did not work together with that wonderful unanimity so fascinating to watch on board a man-of-war. The "Othello" meanwhile, thanks to the trimming of her sails, flew over the water like a swallow; but she was making, to all appearance, so little headway that the unlucky Frenchmen began to entertain sweet delusive hopes. At last, after unheard-of efforts, the "Saint-Ferdinand" sprang forward, Gomez himself directing the shifting of the sheets with voice and gesture, when all at once the man at the tiller, steering at random (purposely, no doubt), swung the vessel round. The wind striking athwart the beam, the sails shivered so unexpectedly that the brig heeled to one side, the booms were carried away, and the vessel was completely out of hand. The captain's face grew whiter than his sails with unutterable rage. He sprang upon the man at the tiller, drove his dagger at him in such blind fury that he missed him, and hurled

the weapon overboard. Gomez took the helm himself, and strove to right the gallant vessel. Tears of despair rose to his eyes, for it is harder to lose the result of our carefully-laid plans through treachery than to face imminent death. But the more the captain swore, the less the men worked, and it was he himself who fired the alarm-gun, hoping to be heard on shore. The privateer, now gaining hopelessly upon them, replied with a cannon-shot, which struck the water ten fathoms away from the "Saint-Ferdinand."

"Thunder of heaven!" cried the General, "that was a close shave! They must have guns made on purpose."

"Oh! when that one yonder speaks, look you, you have to hold your tongue," said a sailor. "The Parisian would not be afraid to meet an English man-of-war."

"It is all over with us," the captain cried in desperation; he had pointed his telescope landward, and saw not a sign from the shore. "We are further from the coast than I thought."

"Why do you despair?" asked the General. "All your passengers are Frenchmen; they have chartered your vessel. The privateer is a Parisian, you say? Well and good, run up the white flag, and—"

"And he would run us down," retorted the captain. "He can be anything he likes when he has a mind to seize on a rich booty!"

"Oh! if he is a pirate—"

"Pirate!" said the ferocious looking sailor. "Oh! he always has the law on his side, or he knows how to be on the same side as the law."

"Very well," said the General, raising his eyes, "let us make up our minds to it," and his remaining fortitude was still sufficient to keep back the tears.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a second cannon-shot, better aimed, came crashing through the hull of the "Saint-Ferdinand."

"Heave to!" cried the captain gloomily.

The sailor who had commended the Parisian's law-abid-

ing proclivities showed himself a clever hand at working a ship after this desperate order was given. The crew waited for half an hour in an agony of suspense and the deepest dismay. The "Saint-Ferdinand" had four millions of piastres on board, the whole fortunes of the five passengers, and the General's eleven hundred thousand francs. At length the "Othello" lay not ten gunshots away, so that those on the "Saint-Ferdinand" could look into the muzzles of her loaded guns. The vessel seemed to be borne along by a breeze sent by the Devil himself, but the eyes of an expert would have discovered the secret of her speed at once. You had but to look for a moment at the rake of her stern, her long, narrow keel, her tall masts, to see the cut of her sails, the wonderful lightness of her rigging, and the ease and perfect seamanship with which her crew trimmed her sails to the wind. Everything about her gave the impression of the security of power in this delicately curved inanimate creature, swift and intelligent as a greyhound or some bird of prey. The privateer crew stood silent, ready in case of resistance to shatter the wretched merchantman, which, luckily for her, remained motionless, like a schoolboy caught in flagrant delict by a master.

"We have guns on board!" cried the General, clutching the Spanish captain's hand. But the courage in Gomez's eyes was the courage of despair.

"Have we men?" he said.

The Marquis looked round at the crew of the "Saint-Ferdinand," and a cold chill ran through him. There stood the four merchants, pale and quaking for fear, while the crew gathered about some of their own number who appeared to be arranging to go over in a body to the enemy. They watched the "Othello" with greed and curiosity in their faces. The captain, the Marquis, and the mate exchanged glances; they were the only three who had a thought for any but themselves.

"Ah! Captain Gomez, when I left my home and country, my heart was half dead with the bitterness of parting, and

now must I bid it good-by once more when I am bringing back happiness and ease for my children?"

The General turned his head away toward the sea with tears of rage in his eyes—and saw the steersman swimming out to the privateer.

"This time it will be good-by for good," said the captain by way of answer, and the dazed look in the Frenchman's eyes startled the Spaniard.

By this time the two vessels were almost alongside, and at the first sight of the enemy's crew the General saw that Gomez's gloomy prophecy was only too true. The three men at each gun might have been bronze statues, standing like athletes, with their rugged features, their bare, sinewy arms, men whom Death himself had scarcely thrown off their feet.

The rest of the crew, well armed, active, light, and vigorous, also stood motionless. Toil had hardened, and the sun had deeply tanned, those energetic faces; their eyes glittered like sparks of fire with infernal glee and clear-sighted courage. Perfect silence on the upper deck, now black with men, bore abundant testimony to the rigorous discipline and strong will which held these fiends incarnate in check.

The captain of the "Othello" stood with folded arms at the foot of the mainmast; he carried no weapons, but an axe lay on the deck beside him. His face was hidden by the shadow of a broad, felt hat. The men looked like dogs crouching before their master. Gunners, soldiers, and ship's crew turned their eyes first on his face, and then on the merchant vessel.

The two brigs came up alongside, and the shock or contact roused the privateer captain from his musings; he spoke a word in the ear of the lieutenant who stood beside him.

"Grappling irons!" shouted the latter, and the "Othello" grappled the "Saint-Ferdinand" with miraculous quickness. The captain of the privateer gave his orders in a low voice to the lieutenant, who repeated them; the men, told off in succession for each duty, went on the upper deck of the

"Saint-Ferdinand," like seminarists going to mass. They bound crew and passengers hand and foot and seized the booty. In the twinkling of an eye, provisions and barrels full of piastres were transferred to the "Othello"; the General thought that he must be dreaming when he himself, likewise bound, was flung down on a bale of goods as if he had been part of the cargo.

A brief conference took place between the captain of the privateer and his lieutenant and a sailor, who seemed to be the mate of the vessel; then the mate gave a whistle, and the men jumped on board the "Saint-Ferdinand," and completely dismantled her with the nimble dexterity of a soldier who strips a dead comrade of a coveted overcoat and shoes.

"It is all over with us," said the Spanish captain coolly. He had eyed the three chiefs during their confabulation, and saw that the sailors were proceeding to pull his vessel to pieces.

"Why so?" asked the General.

"What would you have them do with us?" returned the Spaniard. "They have just come to the conclusion that they will scarcely sell the 'Saint-Ferdinand' in any French or Spanish port, so they are going to sink her to be rid of her. And as for us, do you suppose that they will put themselves to the expense of feeding us, when they don't know what port they are to put into?"

The words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth before a hideous outcry went up, followed by a dull splashing sound, as several bodies were thrown overboard. He turned, the four merchants were no longer to be seen, but eight ferocious-looking gunners were still standing with their arms raised above their heads. He shuddered.

"What did I tell you?" the Spanish captain asked coolly.

The Marquis rose to his feet with a spring. The surface of the sea was quite smooth again; he could not so much as see the place where his unhappy fellow passengers had disappeared. By this time they were sinking down, bound

hand and foot, below the waves, if, indeed, the fish had not devoured them already.

Only a few paces away, the treacherous steersman and the sailor who had boasted of the Parisian's power were fraternizing with the crew of the "Othello," and pointing out those among their own number who, in their opinion, were worthy to join the crew of the privateer. Then the boys tied the rest together by the feet in spite of frightful oaths. It was soon over; the eight gunners seized the doomed men and flung them overboard without more ado, watching the different ways in which the drowning victims met their death, their contortions, their last agony, with a sort of malignant curiosity, but with no sign of amusement, surprise, or pity. For them it was an ordinary event to which seemingly they were quite accustomed. The older men looked instead with grim, set smiles at the casks of piastres about the mainmast.

The General and Captain Gomez, left seated on a bale of goods, consulted each other with wellnigh hopeless looks; they were, in a sense, the sole survivors of the "Saint-Ferdinand," for the seven men pointed out by the spies were transformed amid rejoicings into Peruvians.

"What atrocious villains!" the General cried. Loyal and generous indignation silenced prudence and pain on his own account.

"They do it because they must," Gomez answered coolly. "If you came across one of those fellows, you would run him through the body, would you not?"

The lieutenant now came up to the Spaniard.

"Captain," said he, "the Parisian has heard of you. He says that you are the only man who really knows the passages of the Antilles and the Brazilian coast. Will you—?"

The captain cut him short with a scornful exclamation.

"I shall die like a sailor," he said, "and a loyal Spaniard and a Christian. Do you hear?"

"Heave him overboard!" shouted the lieutenant, and a couple of gunners seized on Gomez.

"You cowards!" roared the General, seizing hold of the men.

"Don't get too excited, old boy," said the lieutenant. "If your red ribbon has made some impression upon our captain, I myself do not care a rap for it.—You and I will have our little bit of talk together directly."

A smothered sound, with no accompanying cry, told the General that the gallant captain had died "like a sailor," as he had said.

"My money or death!" cried the Marquis, in a fit of rage terrible to see.

"Ah! now you talk sensibly!" sneered the lieutenant. "That is the way to get something out of us—"

Two of the men came up at a sign and hastened to bind the Frenchman's feet, but with unlooked-for boldness he snatched the lieutenant's cutlass and laid about him like a cavalry officer who knows his business.

"Brigands that you are! You shall not chuck one of Napoleon's old troopers over a ship's side like an oyster!"

At the sound of pistol shots fired pointblank at the Frenchman, "the Parisian" looked round from his occupation of superintending the transfer of the rigging from the "Saint-Ferdinand." He came up behind the brave General, seized him, dragged him to the side, and was about to fling him over with no more concern than if the man had been a broken spar. They were at the very edge when the General looked into the tawny eyes of the man who had stolen his daughter. The recognition was mutual.

The captain of the privateer, his arm still upraised, suddenly swung it in the contrary direction as if his victim was but a featherweight, and set him down at the foot of the mainmast. A murmur rose on the upper deck, but the captain glanced round, and there was a sudden silence.

"This is Hélène's father," said the captain in a clear, firm voice. "Woe to any one who meddles with him!"

A hurrah of joy went up at the words, a shout rising to

the sky like a prayer of the church; a cry like the first high notes of the "Te Deum." The lads swung aloft in the rigging, the men below flung up their caps, the gunners pounded away on the deck, there was a general thrill of excitement, an outburst of oaths, yells, and shrill cries in voluble chorus. The men cheered like fanatics, the General's misgivings deepened, and he grew uneasy; it seemed to him that there was some horrible mystery in such wild transports.

"My daughter!" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "Where is my daughter?"

For all answer, the captain of the privateer gave him a searching glance, one of those glances which throw the bravest man into a confusion which no theory can explain. The General was mute, not a little to the satisfaction of the crew; it pleased them to see their leader exercise the strange power which he possessed over all with whom he came in contact. Then the captain led the way down a staircase and flung open the door of a cabin.

"There she is," he said, and disappeared, leaving the General in a stupor of bewilderment at the scene before his eyes.

Hélène cried out at the sight of him, and sprang up from the sofa on which she was lying when the door flew open. So changed was she that none but a father's eyes could have recognized her. The sun of the tropics had brought warmer tones into the once pale face, and something of Oriental charm with that wonderful coloring; there was a certain grandeur about her, a majestic firmness, a profound sentiment which impresses itself upon the coarsest nature. Her long, thick hair, falling in large curls about her queenly throat, gave an added idea of power to the proud face. The consciousness of that power shone out from every movement, every line of Hélène's form. The rose-tinted nostrils were dilated slightly with the joy of triumph; the serene happiness of her life had left its plain tokens in the full development of her beauty. A certain indefinable virginal grace met in her with the pride of a

woman who is loved. This was a slave and a queen, a queen who would fain obey that she might reign.

Her dress was magnificent and elegant in its richness; India muslin was the sole material, but her sofa and cushions were of cashmere. A Persian carpet covered the floor in the large cabin, and her four children playing at her feet were building castles of gems and pearl necklaces and jewels of price. The air was full of the scent of rare flowers in Sèvres porcelain vases painted by Mme. Jacotot; tiny South American birds, like living rubies, sapphires, and gold, hovered among the Mexican jessamines and camellias. A pianoforte had been fitted into the room, and here and there on the panelled walls, covered with red silk, hung small pictures by great painters—a "Sunset" by Hippolyte Schinner beside a Terburg, one of Rafael's Madonnas scarcely yielded in charm to a sketch by Géricault, while a Gerard Dow eclipsed the painters of the Empire. On a lacquered table stood a golden plate full of delicious fruit. Indeed, Hélène might have been the sovereign lady of some great country, and this cabin of hers a boudoir in which her crowned lover had brought together all earth's treasures to please his consort. The children gazed with bright, keen eyes at their grandfather. Accustomed as they were to a life of battle, storm, and tumult, they recalled the Roman children in David's "Brutus," watching the fighting and bloodshed with curious interest.

"What! is it possible?" cried Hélène, catching her father's arm as if to assure herself that this was no vision.

"Hélène!"

"Father!"

They fell into each other's arms, and the old man's embrace was not so close and warm as Hélène's.

"Were you on board that vessel?"

"Yes," he answered sadly, and looking at the little ones, who gathered about him and gazed with wide open eyes.

"I was about to perish, but—"

"But for my husband," she broke in. "I see how it was."

"Ah!" cried the General, "why must I find you again like this, Hélène? After all the many tears that I have shed, must I still groan for your fate?"

"And why?" she asked, smiling. "Why should you be sorry to learn that I am the happiest woman under the sun?"

"*Happy?*" he cried, with a start of surprise.

"Yes, happy, my kind father," and she caught his hands in hers and covered them with kisses, and pressed them to her throbbing heart. Her caresses, and a something in the carriage of her head, were interpreted yet more plainly by the joy sparkling in her eyes.

"And how is this?" he asked, wondering at his daughter's life, forgetful now of everything but the bright glowing face before him.

"Listen, father; I have for lover, husband, servant, and master one whose soul is as great as the boundless sea, as infinite in his kindness as heaven, a god on earth! Never during these seven years has a chance look, or word, or gesture jarred in the divine harmony of his talk, his love, his caresses. His eyes have never met mine without a gleam of happiness in them; there has always been a bright smile on his lips for me. On deck, his voice rises above the thunder of storms and the tumult of battle; but here below it is soft and melodious as Rossini's music—for he has Rossini's music sent for me. I have everything that woman's caprice can imagine. My wishes are more than fulfilled. In short, I am a queen on the seas; I am obeyed here as perhaps a queen may be obeyed.—Ah!" she cried, interrupting herself, "*happy* did I say? Happiness is no word to express such bliss as mine. All the happiness that should have fallen to all the women in the world has been my share. Knowing one's own great love and self-devotion, to find in *his* heart an infinite love in which a woman's soul is lost, and lost forever—tell me, is this happiness? I have lived through a thousand lives even now. Here, I am alone; here, I command. No

other woman has set foot on this noble vessel, and Victor is never more than a few paces distant from me—he cannot wander further from me than from stern to prow," she added, with a shade of mischief in her manner. "Seven years! A love that outlasts seven years of continual joy, that endures all the tests brought by all the moments that make up seven years—is this love? Oh, no, no! it is something better than all that I know of life . . . human language fails to express the bliss of heaven."

A sudden torrent of tears fell from her burning eyes. The four little ones raised a piteous cry at this, and flocked like chickens about their mother. The oldest boy struck the General with a threatening look.

"Abel, darling," said Hélène, "I am crying for joy."

Hélène took him on her knee, and the child fondled her, putting his arms about her queenly neck, as a lion's whelp might play with the lioness.

"Do you never weary of your life?" asked the General, bewildered by his daughter's enthusiastic language.

"Yes," she said, "sometimes, when we are on land, yet even then I have never parted from my husband."

"But you used to be fond of music and balls and fêtes."

"His voice is music for me; and for fêtes, I devise new toilets for him to see. When he likes my dress, it is as if all the world admired me. Simply for that reason I keep the diamonds and jewels, the precious things, the flowers and masterpieces of art that he heaps upon me, saying, 'Hélène, as you live out of the world, I will have the world come to you.' But for that I would fling them all overboard."

"But there are others on board, wild, reckless men whose passions—"

"I understand, father," she said, smiling. "Do not fear for me. Never was empress encompassed with more observance than I. The men are very superstitious; they look upon me as a sort of tutelary genius, the luck of the vessel.

But *he* is their god; they worship him. Once, and once only, one of the crew showed disrespect, mere words," she added, laughing; "but before Victor knew of it, the others flung the offender overboard, although I forgave him. They love me as their good angel; I nurse them when they are ill; several times I have been so fortunate as to save a life, by constant care such as a woman can give. Poor fellows, they are giants, but they are children at the same time."

"And when there is fighting overhead?"

"I am used to it now; I quaked for fear during the first engagement, but never since.—I am used to such peril, and —I am your daughter," she said; "I love it."

"But how if he should fall?"

"I should die with him."

"And your children?"

"They are children of the sea and of danger; they share the life of their parents. We have but one life, and we do not flinch from it. We have but the one life, our names are written on the same page of the book of Fate, one skiff bears us and our fortunes, and we know it."

"Do you so love him that he is more to you than all besides?"

"All besides?" echoed she. "Let us leave that mystery alone. Yet stay! there is this dear little one—well, this too is *he*," and straining Abel to her in a tight clasp, she set eager kisses on his cheeks and hair.

"But I can never forget that he has just drowned nine men!" exclaimed the General.

"There was no help for it, doubtless," she said, "for he is generous and humane. He sheds as little blood as may be, and only in the interests of the little world which he defends, and the sacred cause for which he is fighting. Talk to him about anything that seems to you to be wrong, and he will convince you, you will see."

"There was that crime of his," muttered the General to himself.

"But how if that crime was a virtue?" she asked, with

cold dignity. "How if man's justice had failed to avenge a great wrong?"

"But a private revenge!" exclaimed her father.

"But what is hell," she cried, "but a revenge through all eternity for the wrong done in a little day?"

"Ah! you are lost! He has bewitched and perverted you. You are talking wildly."

"Stay with us one day, father, and if you will but listen to him, and see him, you will love him."

"Hélène, France lies only a few leagues away," he said gravely.

Hélène trembled; then she went to the porthole and pointed to the savannas of green water spreading far and wide.

"There lies my country," she said, tapping the carpet with her foot.

"But are you not coming with me to see your mother and your sisters and brothers?"

"Oh! yes," she cried, with tears in her voice, "if *he* is willing, if he will come with me."

"So," the General said sternly, "you have neither country nor kin, now, Hélène?"

"I am his wife," she answered proudly, and there was something very noble in her tone. "This is the first happiness in seven years that has not come to me through him," she said—then, as she caught her father's hand and kissed it—"and this is the first word of reproach that I have heard."

"And your conscience?"

"My conscience; he is my conscience!" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Here he is! Even in the thick of a fight I can tell his footstep among all the others on deck," she cried.

A sudden crimson flushed her cheeks and glowed in her features, her eyes lighted up, her complexion changed to velvet whiteness; there was joy and love in every fibre, in the blue veins, in the unconscious trembling of her whole

frame. That quiver of the sensitive plant softened the General.

It was as she had said. The captain came in, sat down in an easy chair, took up his oldest boy, and began to play with him. There was a moment's silence, for the General's deep musing had grown vague and dreamy, and the daintily furnished cabin and the playing children seemed like a nest of halcyons, floating on the waves, between sky and sea, safe in the protection of this man who steered his way amid the perils of war and tempest, as other heads of households guide those in their care among the hazards of common life. He gazed admiringly at Hélène—a dreamlike vision of some sea goddess, gracious in her loveliness, rich in happiness; all the treasures about her grown poor in comparison with the wealth of her nature, paling before the brightness of her eyes, the indefinable romance expressed in her and her surroundings.

The strangeness of the situation took the General by surprise; the ideas of ordinary life were thrown into confusion by this lofty passion and reasoning. Chill and narrow, social conventions faded away before this picture. All these things the old soldier felt, and saw no less how impossible it was that his daughter should give up so wide a life, a life so variously rich, filled to the full with such passionate love. And Hélène had tasted danger without shrinking; how could she return to the petty stage, the superficial circumscribed life of society?

It was the captain who broke the silence at last.

"Am I in the way?" he asked, looking at his wife.

"No," said the General, answering for her. "Hélène has told me all. I see that she is lost to us—"

"No," the captain put in quickly; "in a few years' time the statute of limitations will allow me to go back to France. When the conscience is clear, and a man has broken the law in obedience to—" he stopped short, as if scorning to justify himself.

"How can you commit new murders, such as I have seen with my own eyes, without remorse?"

"We had no provisions," the privateer captain retorted calmly.

"But if you had set the men ashore—"

"They would have given the alarm and sent a man-of-war after us, and we should never have seen Chili again."

"Before France would have given warning to the Spanish admiralty—" began the General.

"But France might take it amiss that a man, with a warrant still out against him, should seize a brig chartered by Bordeaux merchants. And for that matter, have you never fired a shot or so too many in battle?"

The General shrank under the other's eyes. He said no more, and his daughter looked at him half sadly, half triumphant.

"General," the privateer continued, in a deep voice, "I have made it a rule to abstract nothing from booty. But even so, my share will beyond a doubt be far larger than your fortune. Permit me to return it to you in another form—"

He drew a pile of banknotes from the piano, and without counting the packets handed a million of francs to the Marquis.

"You can understand," he said, "that I cannot spend my time in watching vessels pass by to Bordeaux. So unless the dangers of this Bohemian life of ours have some attraction for you, unless you care to see South America and the nights of the tropics, and a bit of fighting now and again for the pleasure of helping to win a triumph for a young nation, or for the name of Simon Bolivar, we must part. The long boat manned with a trustworthy crew is ready for you. And now let us hope that our third meeting will be completely happy."

"Victor," said Hélène in a dissatisfied tone, "I should like to see a little more of my father."

"Ten minutes more or less may bring up a French frigate. However, so be it, we shall have a little fun. The men find things dull."

"Oh, father, go!" cried Hélène, "and take these keepsakes from me to my sister and brothers and—mother," she added. She caught up a handful of jewels and precious stones, folded them in an Indian shawl, and timidly held it out.

"But what shall I say to them from you?" asked he. Her hesitation on the word "mother" seemed to have struck him.

"Oh! can you doubt me? I pray for their happiness every day."

"Hélène," he began, as he watched her closely, "how if we should not meet again? Shall I never know why you left us?"

"That secret is not mine," she answered gravely. "Even if I had the right to tell it, perhaps I should not. For ten years I was more miserable than words can say—"

She broke off, and gave her father the presents for her family. The General had acquired tolerably easy views as to booty in the course of a soldier's career, so he took Hélène's gifts and comforted himself with the reflection that the Parisian captain was sure to wage war against the Spaniards as an honorable man, under the influence of Hélène's pure and high-minded nature. His passion for courage carried all before it. It was ridiculous, he thought, to be squeamish in the matter; so he shook hands cordially with his captor, and kissed Hélène, his only daughter, with a soldier's expansiveness; letting fall a tear on the face with the proud, strong look that once he had loved to see. "The Parisian," deeply moved, brought the children for his blessing. The parting was over, the last good-by was a long farewell look, with something of tender regret on either side.

A strange sight to seaward met the General's eyes. The "Saint-Ferdinand" was blazing like a huge bonfire. The men told off to sink the Spanish brig had found a cargo of rum on board; and as the "Othello" was already amply

supplied, had lighted a floating bowl of punch on the high seas, by way of a joke; a pleasantry pardonable enough in sailors, who hail any chance excitement as a relief from the apparent monotony of life at sea. As the General went over the side into the long-boat of the "Saint-Ferdinand," manned by six vigorous rowers, he could not help looking at the burning vessel, as well as at the daughter who stood by her husband's side on the stern of the "Othello." He saw Hélène's white dress flutter like one more sail in the breeze; he saw the tall, noble figure against a background of sea, queenly still even in the presence of Ocean; and so many memories crowded up in his mind, that, with a soldier's recklessness of life, he forgot that he was being borne over the grave of the brave Gomez.

A vast column of smoke rising spread like a brown cloud pierced here and there by fantastic shafts of sunlight. It was a second sky, a murky dome reflecting the glow of the fire as if the under surface had been burnished; but above it soared the unchanging blue of the firmament, a thousand times fairer for the short-lived contrast. The strange hues of the smoke cloud, black and red, tawny and pale by turns, blurred and blending into each other, shrouded the burning vessel as it flared, crackled, and groaned; the hissing tongues of flame licked up the rigging, and flashed across the hull, like a rumor of riot flashing along the streets of a city. The burning rum sent up blue flitting lights. Some sea god might have been stirring the furious liquor as a student stirs the joyous flames of punch in an orgy. But in the overpowering sunlight, jealous of the insolent blaze, the colors were scarcely visible, and the smoke was but a film fluttering like a thin scarf in the noonday torrent of light and heat.

The "Othello" made the most of the little wind she could gain to fly on her new course. Swaying first to one side, then to the other, like a stag beetle on the wing, the fair vessel beat to windward on her zigzag flight to the south. Sometimes she was hidden from sight by the straight column

of smoke that flung fantastic shadows across the water, then gracefully she shot out clear of it, and Hélène, catching sight of her father, waved her handkerchief for yet one more farewell greeting.

A few more minutes, and the "Saint-Ferdinand" went down with a bubbling turmoil, at once effaced by the ocean. Nothing of all that had been was left but a smoke cloud hanging in the breeze. The "Othello" was far away, the long-boat had almost reached land, the cloud came between the frail skiff and the brig, and it was through a break in the swaying smoke that the General caught the last glimpse of Hélène. A prophetic vision! Her dress and her white handkerchief stood out against the murky background. Then the brig was not even visible between the green water and the blue sky, and Hélène was nothing but an imperceptible speck, a faint graceful line, an angel in heaven, a mental image, a memory.

The Marquis had retrieved his fortunes, when he died, worn out with toil. A few months after his death, in 1833, the Marquise was obliged to take Moïna to a watering-place in the Pyrenees, for the capricious child had a wish to see the beautiful mountain scenery. They left the baths, and the following tragical incident occurred on their way home.

"Dear me, mother," said Moina, "it was very foolish of us not to stay among the mountains a few days longer. It was much nicer there. Did you hear that horrid child moaning all night, and that wretched woman, gabbling away in patois no doubt, for I could not understand a single word she said. What kind of people can they have put in the next room to ours? This is one of the horridest nights I have ever spent in my life."

"I heard nothing," said the Marquise, "but I will see the landlady, darling, and engage the next room, and then we shall have the whole suite of rooms to ourselves, and there will be no more noise. How do you feel this morning? Are you tired?"

As she spoke, the Marquise rose and went to Moina's bedside.

"Let us see," she said, feeling for the girl's hand.

"Oh! let me alone, mother," said Moina; "your fingers are cold."

She turned her head round on the pillow as she spoke, pettishly, but with such engaging grace that a mother could scarcely have taken it amiss. Just then a wailing cry echoed through the next room, a faint prolonged cry, that must surely have gone to the heart of any woman who heard it.

"Why, if you heard *that* all night long, why did you not wake me? We should have—"

A deeper moan than any that had gone before it interrupted the Marquise.

"Some one is dying there," she cried, and hurried out of the room.

"Send Pauline to me!" called Moina. "I shall get up and dress."

The Marquise hastened downstairs, and found the landlady in the courtyard with a little group about her, apparently much interested in something that she was telling them.

"Madame, you have put some one in the next room who seems to be very ill indeed—"

"Oh! don't talk to me about it!" cried the mistress of the house. "I have just sent some one for the mayor. Just imagine it; it is a woman, a poor unfortunate creature that came here last night on foot. She comes from Spain; she has no passport and no money; she was carrying her baby on her back, and the child was dying. I could not refuse to take her in. I went up to see her this morning myself; for when she turned up yesterday, it made me feel dreadfully bad to look at her. Poor soul! she and the child were lying in bed, and both of them at death's door. 'Madame,' says she, pulling a gold ring off her finger, 'this is all that I have left; take it in payment, it will be enough; I shall not stay here long. Poor little one! we shall die together soon!' she

said, looking at the child. I took her ring, and I asked her who she was, but she never would tell me her name. . . . I have just sent for the doctor and M. le Maire."

"Why, you must do all that can be done for her," cried the Marquise. "Good heavens! perhaps it is not too late! I will pay for everything that is necessary—"

"Ah! my lady, she looks to me to be uncommonly proud, and I don't know that she would allow it."

"I will go to see her at once."

The Marquise went up forthwith to the stranger's room, without thinking of the shock that the sight of her widow's weeds might give to a woman who was said to be dying. At the sight of that dying woman the Marquise turned pale. In spite of the changes wrought by fearful suffering in Hélène's beautiful face, she recognized her elder daughter.

But Hélène, when she saw a woman dressed in black, sat upright in bed with a shriek of horror. Then she sank back; she knew her mother.

"My daughter," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, "what is to be done? Pauline! . . . Moina! . . ."

"Nothing now for me," said Hélène faintly. "I had hoped to see my father once more, but your mourning—" she broke off, clutched her child to her heart as if to give it warmth, and kissed its forehead. Then she turned her eyes on her mother, and the Marquise met the old reproach in them, tempered with forgiveness, it is true, but still reproach. She saw it, and would not see it. She forgot that Hélène was the child conceived amid tears and despair, the child of duty, the cause of one of the greatest sorrows in her life. She stole to her elder daughter's side, remembering nothing but that Hélène was her firstborn, the child who had taught her to know the joys of motherhood. The mother's eyes were full of tears. "Hélène, my child! . . ." she cried, with her arms about her daughter.

Hélène was silent. Her own babe had just drawn its last breath on her breast.

Moina came into the room with Pauline, her maid, and

the landlady and the doctor. The Marquise was holding her daughter's ice-cold hand in both of hers, and gazing at her in despair; but the widowed woman, who had escaped shipwreck with but one of all her fair band of children, spoke in a voice that was dreadful to hear. "All this is your work," she said. "If you had but been for me all that—"

"Moina, go! Go out of the room, all of you!" cried Mme. d'Aiglemont, her shrill tones drowning Hélène's voice. —"For pity's sake," she continued, "let us not begin these miserable quarrels again now—"

"I will be silent," Hélène answered with a preternatural effort. "I am a mother; I know that Moina ought not . . . Where is my child?"

Moina came back, impelled by curiosity.

"Sister," said the spoiled child, "the doctor—"

"It is all of no use," said Hélène. "Oh! why did I not die as a girl of sixteen when I meant to take my own life? There is no happiness outside the laws. Moina . . . you . . ."

Her head sank till her face lay against the face of the little one; in her agony she strained her babe to her breast, and died.

"Your sister, Moina," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, bursting into tears when she reached her room, "your sister meant no doubt to tell you that a girl will never find happiness in a romantic life, in living as nobody else does, and, above all things, far away from her mother."

VI

THE OLD AGE OF A GUILTY MOTHER

IT WAS ONE of the earliest June days of the year 1844. A lady of fifty or thereabout, for she looked older than her actual age, was pacing up and down one of the sunny paths in the garden of a great mansion in the Rue Plumet in Paris. It was noon. The lady took two or three turns along the gently winding garden walk, careful never to lose sight of a certain row of windows, to which she seemed to give her whole attention; then she sat down on a bench, a piece of elegant semi-rusticity made of branches with the bark left on the wood. From the place where she sat she could look through the garden railings along the inner boulevards to the wonderful dome of the Invalides rising above the crests of a forest of elm-trees, and see the less striking view of her own grounds terminating in the gray stone front of one of the finest hotels in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Silence lay over the neighboring gardens, and the boulevards stretching away to the Invalides. Day scarcely begins at noon in that aristocratic quarter, and masters and servants are all alike asleep, or just awakening, unless some young lady takes it into her head to go for an early ride, or a gray-headed diplomatist rises betimes to redraft a protocol.

The elderly lady stirring abroad at that hour was the Marquise d'Aiglemont, the mother of Mme. de Saint Héreen, to whom the great house belonged. The Marquise had made over the mansion and almost her whole fortune to her daughter, reserving only an annuity for herself.

The Comtesse Moina de Saint-Héreen was Mme. d'Aiglemont's youngest child. The Marquise had made every sacrifice to marry her daughter to the eldest son of one of the

greatest houses of France; and this was only what might have been expected, for the lady had lost her sons, first one and then the other. Gustave, Marquis d'Aiglemont, had died of the cholera; Abel, the second, had fallen in Algeria. Gustave had left a widow and children, but the dowager's affection for her sons had been only moderately warm, and for the next generation it was decidedly tepid. She was always civil to her daughter-in-law, but her feeling toward the young Marquise was the distinctly conventional affection which good taste and good manners require us to feel for our relatives. The fortunes of her dead children having been settled, she could devote her savings and her own property to her darling Moina.

Moina, beautiful and fascinating from childhood, was Mme. d'Aiglemont's favorite; loved beyond all the others with an instinctive or involuntary love, a fatal drawing of the heart, which sometimes seems inexplicable, sometimes, and to a close observer, only too easy to explain. Her darling's pretty face, the sound of Moina's voice, her ways, her manner, her looks and gestures, roused all the deepest emotions that can stir a mother's heart with trouble, rapture, or delight. The springs of the Marquise's life, of yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day, lay in that young heart. Moina, with better fortune, had survived four older children. As a matter of fact, Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her elder daughter, a charming girl, in a most unfortunate manner, said gossip, nobody knew exactly what became of her; and then she lost a little boy of five by a dreadful accident.

The child of her affections had, however, been spared to her, and doubtless the Marquise saw the will of Heaven in that fact; for of those who had died, she kept but very shadowy recollections in some far-off corner of her heart; her memories of her dead children were like the headstones on a battlefield, you can scarcely see them for the flowers that have sprung up about them since. Of course, if the world had chosen, it might have said some hard truths about the Marquise, might have taken her to task for shallowness and

an overweening preference for one child at the expense of the rest; but the world of Paris is swept along by the full flood of new events, new ideas, and new fashions, and it was inevitable that Mme. d'Aiglemont should be in some sort allowed to drop out of sight. So nobody thought of blaming her for coldness or neglect which concerned no one, whereas her quick, apprehensive tenderness for Moina was found highly interesting by not a few who respected it as a sort of superstition. Besides, the Marquise scarcely went into society at all; and the few families who knew her thought of her as a kindly, gentle, indulgent woman, wholly devoted to her family. What but a curiosity, keen indeed, would seek to pry beneath the surface with which the world is quite satisfied? And what would we not pardon to old people, if only they will efface themselves like shadows, and consent to be regarded as memories and nothing more!

Indeed, Mme. d'Aiglemont became a kind of example complacently held up by the younger generation to fathers of families, and frequently cited to mothers-in-law. She had made over her property to Moina in her own lifetime; the young Countess's happiness was enough for her, she only lived in her daughter. If some cautious old person or morose uncle here and there condemned the course with—"Perhaps Mme. d'Aiglemont may be sorry some day that she gave up her fortune to her daughter; she may be sure of Moina, but how can she be equally sure of her son-in-law?"—these prophets were cried down on all sides, and from all sides a chorus of praise went up for Moina.

"It ought to be said, in justice to Mme. de Saint-Héreen, that her mother cannot feel the slightest difference," remarked a young married woman. "Mme. d'Aiglemont is admirably well housed. She has a carriage at her disposal, and can go everywhere just as she used to do—"

"Except to the Italiens," remarked a low voice. (This was an elderly parasite, one of those persons who show their independence—as they think—by riddling their friends with epigrams.) "Except to the Italiens. And if the dowager

cares for anything on this earth but her daughter—it is music. Such a good performer she was in her time! But the Countess's box is always full of young butterflies, and the Countess's mother would be in the way; the young lady is talked about already as a great flirt. So the poor mother never goes to the Italiens."

"Mme. de Saint Héreen has delightful 'At Homes' for her mother," said a rosebud. "All Paris goes to her salon."

"And no one pays any attention to the Marquise," returned the parasite.

"The fact is that Mme. d'Aiglemont is never alone," remarked a coxcomb, siding with the young women.

"In the morning," the old observer continued in a discreet voice, "in the morning dear Moina is asleep. At four o'clock dear Moina drives in the Bois. In the evening dear Moina goes to a ball or to the Bouffes.—Still, it is certainly true that Mme. d'Aiglemont has the privilege of seeing her dear daughter while she dresses, and again at dinner, if dear Moina happens to dine with her mother. Not a week ago, sir," continued the elderly person, laying his hand on the arm of the shy tutor, a new arrival in the house, "not a week ago, I saw the poor mother, solitary and sad, by her own fireside.—'What is the matter?' I asked. The Marquise looked up smiling, but I am quite sure that she had been crying.—'I was thinking that it is a strange thing that I should be left alone when I have had five children,' she said, 'but that is our destiny! And besides, I am happy when I know that Moina is enjoying herself.'—She could say that to me, for I knew her husband when he was alive. A poor stick he was, and uncommonly lucky to have such a wife; it was certainly owing to her that he was made a peer of France, and had a place at Court under Charles X."

Yet such mistaken ideas get about in social gossip, and such mischief is done by it, that the historian of manners is bound to exercise his discretion, and weigh the assertions so recklessly made. After all, who is to say that either

mother or daughter was right or wrong. There is but One who can read and judge their hearts! And how often does He wreak His vengeance in the family circle, using throughout all time children as his instruments against their mothers, and fathers against their sons, raising up peoples against kings, and princes against peoples, sowing strife and division everywhere? And in the world of ideas, are not old opinions and feelings expelled by new feelings and opinions, much as withered leaves are thrust forth by the young leaf buds in the spring?—all in obedience to the immutable Scheme; all to some end which God alone knows. Yet, surely, all things proceed to Him, or rather, to Him all things return.

Such thoughts of religion, the natural thoughts of age, floated up now and again on the current of Mme. d'Aiglemont's thoughts; they were always dimly present in her mind, but sometimes they shone out clearly, sometimes they were carried under, like flowers tossed on the vexed surface of a stormy sea.

She sat on the garden-seat, tired with walking, exhausted with much thinking—with the long thoughts in which a whole lifetime rises up before the mind, and is spread out like a scroll before the eyes of those who feel that Death is near.

If a poet had chanced to pass along the boulevard, he would have found an interesting picture in the face of this woman, grown old before her time. As she sat under the dotted shadow of the acacia, the shadow the acacia casts at noon, a thousand thoughts were written for all the world to see on her features, pale and cold even in the hot, bright sunlight. There was something sadder than the sense of waning life in that expressive face, some trouble that went deeper than the weariness of experience. It was a face of a type that fixes you in a moment among a host of characterless faces that fail to draw a second glance, a face to set you thinking. Among a thousand pictures in a gallery, you are strongly impressed by the sublime anguish on the face of some Madonna of Murillo's; by some "Beatrice

Cenci'' in which Guido's art portrays the most touching innocence against a background of horror and crime; by the awe and majesty that should encircle a king, caught once and forever by Velasquez in the sombre face of a Philip II., and so is it with some living human faces; they are tyrannous pictures which speak to you, submit you to searching scrutiny, and give response to your inmost thoughts, nay, there are faces that set forth a whole drama, and Mme. d'Aiglemont's stony face was one of these awful tragedies, one of such faces as Dante Alighieri saw by thousands in his vision.

For the little season that a woman's beauty is in flower it serves her admirably well in the dissimulation to which her natural weakness and our social laws condemn her. A young face and rich color, and eyes that glow with light, a gracious maze of such subtle, manifold lines and curves, flawless and perfectly traced, is a screen that hides everything that stirs the woman within. A flush tells nothing, it only heightens the coloring so brilliant already; all the fires that burn within can add little light to the flame of life in eyes which only seem the brighter for the flash of a passing pain. Nothing is so discreet as a young face, for nothing is less mobile; it has the serenity, the surface smoothness, and the freshness of a lake. There is no character in women's faces before the age of thirty. The painter discovers nothing there but pink and white, and the smile and expression that repeat the same thought in the same way—a thought of youth and love that goes no further than youth and love. But the face of an old woman has expressed all that lay in her nature; passion has carved lines on her features; love and wifehood and motherhood, and extremes of joy and anguish, have wrung them, and left their traces in a thousand wrinkles, all of which speak a language of their own; then is it that a woman's face becomes sublime in its horror, beautiful in its melancholy, grand in its calm. If it is permissible to carry the strange metaphor still further, it might be said that in the dried-up lake you can see the traces of all the

torrents that once poured into it and made it what it is. An old face is nothing to the frivolous world; the frivolous world is shocked by the sight of the destruction of such comeliness as it can understand; a commonplace artist sees nothing there. An old face is the province of the poets among poets of those who can recognize that something which is called Beauty, apart from all the conventions underlying so many superstitions in art and taste.

Though Mme. d'Aiglemont wore a fashionable bonnet, it was easy to see that her once black hair had been bleached by cruel sorrows; yet her good taste and the gracious acquired instincts of a woman of fashion could be seen in the way she wore it, divided into two *bandeaux*, following the outlines of a forehead that still retained some traces of former dazzling beauty, worn and lined though it was. The contours of her face, the regularity of her features, gave some idea, faint in truth, of that beauty of which surely she had once been proud, but those traces spoke still more plainly of the anguish which had laid it waste, of sharp pain that had withered the temples, and made those hollows in her cheeks, and empurpled the eyelids, and robbed them of their lashes, and the eyes of their charm. She was in every way so noiseless; she moved with a slow, self-contained gravity that showed itself in her whole bearing, and struck a certain awe into others. Her diffident manner had changed to positive shyness, due apparently to a habit now of some years' growth, of effacing herself in her daughter's presence. She spoke very seldom, and in the low tones used by those who perforce must live within themselves a life of reflection and concentration. This demeanor led others to regard her with an indefinable feeling which was neither awe nor compassion, but a mysterious blending of the many ideas awakened in us by compassion and awe. Finally, there was something in her wrinkles, in the lines of her face, in the look of pain in those wan eyes of hers, that bore eloquent testimony to tears that never had fallen,

tears that had been absorbed by her heart. Unhappy creatures, accustomed to raise their eyes to heaven, in mute appeal against the bitterness of their lot, would have seen at once from her eyes that she was broken in to the cruel discipline of ceaseless prayer, would have discerned the almost imperceptible symptoms of the secret bruises which destroy all the flowers of the soul, even the sentiment of motherhood.

Painters have colors for these portraits, but words, and the mental images called up by words, fail to reproduce such impressions faithfully; there are mysterious signs and tokens in the tones of the coloring and in the look of human faces, which the mind only seizes through the sense of sight; and the poet is fain to record the tale of the events which wrought the havoc to make their terrible ravages understood.

The face spoke of cold and steady storm, an inward conflict between a mother's long-suffering and the limitations of our nature, for our human affections are bounded by our humanity, and the infinite has no place in finite creatures. Sorrow endured in silence had at last produced an indefinable morbid something in this woman. Doubtless mental anguish had reacted on the physical frame, and some disease, perhaps an aneurism, was undermining Julie's life. Deep-seated grief lies to all appearance very quietly in the depths where it is conceived, yet, so still and apparently dormant as it is, it ceaselessly corrodes the soul, like the terrible acid which eats away crystal.

Two tears made their way down the Marquise's cheeks; she rose to her feet as if some thought more poignant than any that preceded it had cut her to the quick. She had doubtless come to a conclusion as to Moina's future; and now, foreseeing clearly all the troubles in store for her child, the sorrows of her own unhappy life had begun to weigh once more upon her. The key of her position must be sought in her daughter's situation.

The Comte de Saint-Héreen had been away for nearly six

months on a political mission. The Countess, whether from sheer giddiness, or in obedience to the countless instincts of woman's coquetry, or to essay its power—with all the vanity of a frivolous fine lady, all the capricious waywardness of a child—was amusing herself, during her husband's absence, by playing with the passion of a clever but heartless man, distracted (so he said) with love, the love that combines readily with every petty social ambition of a self-conceited coxcomb. Mme. d'Aiglemont, whose long experience had given her a knowledge of life, and taught her to judge of men and to dread the world, watched the course of this flirtation, and saw that it could only end in one way, if her daughter should fall into the hands of an utterly unscrupulous intriguer. How could it be other than a terrible thought for her that her daughter listened willingly to this *roué?* Her darling stood on the brink of a precipice, she felt horribly sure of it, yet dared not hold her back. She was afraid of the Countess. She knew too that Moina would not listen to her wise warnings; she knew that she had no influence over that nature—iron for her, silken-soft for all others. Her mother's tenderness might have led her to sympathize with the troubles of a passion called forth by the nobler qualities of a lover, but this was no passion—it was coquetry, and the Marquise despised Alfred de Vandenesse, knowing that he had entered upon this flirtation with Moina as if it were a game of chess.

But if Alfred de Vandenesse made her shudder with disgust, she was obliged—unhappy mother!—to conceal the strongest reason for her loathing in the deepest recesses of her heart. She was on terms of intimate friendship with the Marquis de Vandenesse, the young man's father; and this friendship, a respectable one in the eyes of the world, excused the son's constant presence in the house, he professing an old attachment, dating from childhood, for Mme. de Saint-Héreen. More than this, in vain did Mme. d'Aiglemont nerve herself to come between

Moina and Alfred de Vandenesse with a terrible word, knowing beforehand that she should not succeed; knowing that the strong reason which ought to separate them would carry no weight; that she should humiliate herself vainly in her daughter's eyes. Alfred was too corrupt; Moina too clever to believe the revelation; the young Countess would turn it off and treat it as a piece of maternal strategy. Mme. d'Aiglemont had built her prison walls with her own hands; she had immured herself only to see Moina's happiness ruined thence before she died; she was to look on helplessly at the ruin of the young life which had been her pride and joy and comfort, a life a thousand times dearer to her than her own. What words can describe anguish so hideous beyond belief, such unfathomed depths of pain?

She waited for Moina to rise, with the impatience and sickening dread of a doomed man, who longs to have done with life, and turns cold at the thought of the headsman. She had braced herself for a last effort, but perhaps the prospect of the certain failure of the attempt was less dreadful to her than the fear of receiving yet again one of those thrusts that went to her very heart—before that fear her courage ebbed away. Her mother's love had come to this. To love her child, to be afraid of her, to shrink from the thought of the stab, yet to go forward. So great is a mother's affection in a loving nature, that before it can fade away into indifference the mother herself must die or find support in some great power without her, in religion or another love. Since the Marquise rose that morning, her fatal memory had called up before her some of those things, so slight to all appearance, that make landmarks in a life. Sometimes, indeed, a whole tragedy grows out of a single gesture; the tone in which a few words were spoken rends a whole life in two; a glance into indifferent eyes is the deathblow of the gladdest love; and, unhappily, such gestures and such words were only too familiar to Mme. d'Aiglemont—she had met so many glances that wound the

soul. No, there was nothing in those memories to bid her hope. On the contrary, everything went to show that Alfred had destroyed her hold on her daughter's heart, that the thought of her was now associated with duty—not with gladness. In ways innumerable, in things that were mere trifles in themselves, the Countess's detestable conduct rose up before her mother; and the Marquise, it may be, looked on Moina's undutifulness as a punishment, and found excuses for her daughter in the will of Heaven, that so she still might adore the hand that smote her.

All these things passed through her memory that morning, and each recollection wounded her afresh so sorely that with a very little additional pain her brimming cup of bitterness must have overflowed. A cold look might kill her.

The little details of domestic life are difficult to paint; but one or two perhaps will suffice to give an idea of the rest.

The Marquise d'Aiglemont, for instance, had grown rather deaf, but she could never induce Moina to raise her voice for her. Once, with the naiveté of suffering, she had begged Moina to repeat some remark which she had failed to catch, and Moina obeyed, but with so bad a grace that Mme. d'Aiglemont had never permitted herself to make her modest request again. Ever since that day when Moina was talking or retailing a piece of news, her mother was careful to come near to listen; but this infirmity of deafness appeared to put the Countess out of patience, and she would grumble thoughtlessly about it. This instance is one from among very many that must have gone to the mother's heart; and yet nearly all of them might have escaped a close observer, they consisted in faint shades of manner invisible to any but a woman's eyes. Take another example. Mme. d'Aiglemont happened to say one day that the Princesse de Cadignan had called upon her. "Did she come to see *you*!" Moina exclaimed. That was all; but the Countess's voice and manner expressed surprise and well-bred contempt in semitones. Any heart, still young and sensitive, might well

have applauded the philanthropy of savage tribes who kill off their old people when they grow too feeble to cling to a strongly shaken bough. Mme. d'Aiglemont rose smiling, and went away to weep alone.

Well-bred people, and women especially, only betray their feelings by imperceptible touches; but those who can look back over their own experience on such bruises as this mother's heart received, know also how the heart-strings vibrate to these light touches. Overcome by her memories, Mme. d'Aiglemont recollected one of those microscopically small things, so stinging and so painful was it that never till this moment had she felt all the heartless contempt that lurked beneath smiles.

At the sound of shutters thrown back at her daughter's windows, she dried her tears, and hastened up the pathway by the railings. As she went, it struck her that the gardener had been unusually careful to rake the sand along the walk which had been neglected for some little time. As she stood under her daughter's windows, the shutters were hastily closed.

"Moina, is it you?" she asked.

No answer.

The Marquise went on into the house.

"Mme. la Comtesse is in the little drawing room," said the maid, when the Marquise asked whether Mme. de Saint-Héreen had finished dressing.

Mme. d'Aiglemont hurried to the little drawing-room; her heart was too full, her brain too busy to notice matters so slight; but there on a sofa sat the Countess in her loose morning-gown, her hair in disorder under the cap tossed carelessly on her head, her feet thrust into slippers. The key of her bedroom hung at her girdle. Her face, aglow with color, bore traces of almost stormy thought.

"What makes people come in!" she cried crossly. "Oh! it is you, mother," she interrupted herself, with a preoccupied look.

"Yes, child; it is your mother—"

Something in her tone turned those words into an outpouring of the heart, the cry of some deep inward feeling, only to be described by the word "holy." So thoroughly in truth had she rehabilitated the sacred character of a mother, that her daughter was impressed, and turned toward her, with something of awe, uneasiness, and remorse in her manner. The room was the furthest of a suite, and safe from indiscreet intrusion, for no one could enter it without giving warning of approach through the previous apartments. The Marquise closed the door.

"It is my duty, my child, to warn you in one of the most serious crises in the lives of us women; you have perhaps reached it unconsciously, and I am come to speak to you as a friend rather than as a mother. When you married, you acquired freedom of action; you are only accountable to your husband now; but I asserted my authority so little (perhaps I was wrong), that I think I have a right to expect you to listen to me, for once at least, in a critical position when you must need counsel. Bear in mind, Moina, that you are married to a man of high ability, a man of whom you may well be proud, a man who—"

"I know what you are going to say, mother!" Moina broke in pettishly. "I am to be lectured about Alfred—"

"Moina," the Marquise said gravely, as she struggled with her tears, "you would not guess at once if you did not feel—"

"What?" asked Moina, almost haughtily. "Why, really, mother—"

Mme. d'Aiglemont summoned up all her strength. "Moina," she said, "you must attend carefully to this that I ought to tell you—"

"I am attending," returned the Countess, folding her arms, and affecting insolent submission. "Permit me, mother, to ring for Pauline," she added with incredible self-possession; "I will send her away first."

She rang the bell.

"My dear child, Pauline cannot possibly hear—"

"Mamma," interrupted the Countess, with a gravity which must have struck her mother as something unusual, "I must—"

She stopped short, for the woman was in the room.

"Pauline, go *yourself* to Baudran's, and ask why my hat has not yet been sent."

Then the Countess reseated herself and scrutinized her mother. The Marquise, with a swelling heart and dry eyes, in painful agitation, which none but a mother can fully understand, began to open Moina's eyes to the risk that she was running. But either the Countess felt hurt and indignant at her mother's suspicions of a son of the Marquis de Vandenesse, or she was seized with a sudden fit of inexplicable levity caused by the inexperience of youth. She took advantage of a pause.

"Mamma, I thought you were only jealous of *the father*—" she said, with a forced laugh.

Mme. d'Aiglemont shut her eyes and bent her head at the words, with a very faint, almost inaudible sigh. She looked up and out into space, as if she felt the common overmastering impulse to appeal to God at the great crises of our lives; then she looked at her daughter, and her eyes were full of awful majesty and the expression of profound sorrow.

"My child," she said, and her voice was hardly recognizable, "you have been less merciful to your mother than he against whom she sinned; less merciful than perhaps God Himself will be!"

Mme. d'Aiglemont rose; at the door she turned; but she saw nothing but surprise in her daughter's face. She went out. Scarcely had she reached the garden when her strength failed her. There was a violent pain at her heart, and she sank down on a bench. As her eyes wandered over the path, she saw fresh marks there, a man's footprints were distinctly recognizable. It was too late, then, beyond a doubt. Now she began to understand the reason for that order given to Pauline, and with these torturing thoughts

came a revelation more hateful than any that had gone before it. She drew her own inferences—the son of the Marquis de Vandenesse had destroyed all feeling of respect for her in her daughter's mind. The physical pain grew worse; by degrees she lost consciousness, and sat like one asleep upon the garden-seat.

The Countess de Saint-Héreen, left to herself, thought that her mother had given her a somewhat shrewd home-thrust, but a kiss and a few attentions that evening would make all right again.

A shrill cry came from the garden. She leaned carelessly out, as Pauline, not yet departed on her errand, called out for help, holding the Marquise in her arms.

"Do not frighten my daughter!" those were the last words the mother uttered.

Moina saw them carry in a pale and lifeless form that struggled for breath, and arms moving restlessly as in protest or effort to speak; and overcome by the sight, Moina followed in silence, and helped to undress her mother and lay her on her bed. The burden of her fault was greater than she could bear. In that supreme hour she learned to know her mother—too late, she could make no reparation now. She would have them leave her alone with her mother; and when there was no one else in the room, when she felt that the hand which had always been so tender for her was now grown cold to her touch, she broke out into weeping. Her tears aroused the Marquise; she could still look at her darling Moina; and at the sound of sobbing, that seemed as if it must rend the delicate, dishevelled breast, could smile back at her daughter. That smile taught the unnatural child that forgiveness is always to be found in the great deep of a mother's heart.

Servants on horseback had been despatched at once for the physician and surgeon and for Mme. d'Aiglemont's grandchildren. Mme. d'Aiglemont the younger and her little sons arrived with the medical men, a sufficiently im-

pressive, silent, and anxious little group, which the servants of the house came to join. The young Marquise, hearing no sound, tapped gently at the door. That signal, doubtless, roused Moina from her grief, for she flung open the doors and stood before them. No words could have spoken more plainly than that dishevelled figure looking out with haggard eyes upon the assembled family. Before that living picture of Remorse, the rest were dumb. It was easy to see that the Marquise's feet were stretched out stark and stiff with the agony of death; and Moina, leaning against the door-frame, looking in their faces, spoke in a hollow voice:

"I have lost my mother!"

PARIS, 1828–1844.

A FORSAKEN LADY

To her Grace the Duchesse d'Abrantès,
from her devoted servant,
Honoré de Balzac

PARIS, *August, 1835*

IN THE EARLY spring of 1822, the Paris doctors sent to Lower Normandy a young man just recovering from an inflammatory complaint, brought on by overstudy, or perhaps by excess of some other kind. His convalescence demanded complete rest, a light diet, bracing air, and freedom from excitement of every kind, and the fat lands of Bessin seemed to offer all these conditions of recovery. To Bayeux, a picturesque place about six miles from the sea, the patient therefore betook himself, and was received with the cordiality characteristic of relatives who lead very retired lives, and regard a new arrival as a godsend.

All little towns are alike, save for a few local customs. When M. le Baron Gaston de Nueil, the young Parisian in question, had spent two or three evenings in his cousin's house, or with the friends who made up Mme. de Sainte-Sevère's circle, he very soon had made the acquaintance of the persons whom this exclusive society considered to be "the whole town." Gaston de Nueil recognized in them the invariable stock characters which every observer finds in every one of the many capitals of the little States which made up the France of an older day.

First of all comes the family whose claims to nobility are regarded as incontestable, and of the highest antiquity in the department, though no one has so much as heard of them a bare fifty leagues away. This species of royal family on a

small scale is distantly, but unmistakably, connected with the Navarreins and the Grandlieu family, and related to the Cadignans, and the Blamont-Chauvrys. The head of the illustrious house is invariably a determined sportsman. He has no manners, crushes everybody else with his nominal superiority, tolerates the sub-prefect much as he submits to the taxes, and declines to acknowledge any of the novel powers created by the nineteenth century, pointing out to you as a political monstrosity the fact that the prime minister is a man of no birth. His wife takes a decided tone, and talks in a loud voice. She has had adorers in her time, but takes the Sacrament regularly at Easter. She brings up her daughters badly, and is of the opinion that they will always be rich enough with their name.

Neither husband nor wife has the remotest idea of modern luxury. They retain a livery only seen elsewhere on the stage, and cling to old fashions in plate, furniture, and equipages, as in language and manner of life. This is a kind of ancient state, moreover, that suits passably well with provincial thrift. The good folk are, in fact, the lords of the manor of a bygone age, *minus* the quitrents and heriots, the pack of hounds and the laced coats; full of honor among themselves, and one and all loyally devoted to princes whom they only see at a distance. The historical house *incognito* is as quaint a survival as a piece of ancient tapestry. Vegetating somewhere among them there is sure to be an uncle or a brother, a lieutenant-general, an old courtier of the King's, who wears the red ribbon of the order of Saint-Louis, and went to Hanover with the Maréchal de Richelieu, and here you find him like a stray leaf out of some old pamphlet of the time of Louis Quinze.

This fossil greatness finds a rival in another house, wealthier, though of less ancient lineage. Husband and wife spend a couple of months of every winter in Paris, bringing back with them its frivolous tone and short-lived contemporary crazes. Madame is a woman of fashion, though she looks rather conscious of her clothes, and is always behind the

mode. She scoffs, however, at the ignorance affected by her neighbors. *Her* plate is of modern fashion; she has "grooms," negroes, a valet-de-chambre, and what not. Her oldest son drives a tilbury, and does nothing (the estate is entailed upon him), his younger brother is auditor to a Council of State. The father is well posted up in official scandals, and tells you anecdotes of Louis XVIII. and Mme. du Cayla. He invests his money in the five per cents, and is careful to avoid the topic of cider, but has been known occasionally to fall a victim to the craze for rectifying the conjectural sums-total of the various fortunes of the department. He is a member of the Departmental Council, has his clothes from Paris, and wears the Cross of the Legion of Honor. In short, he is a country gentleman who has fully grasped the significance of the Restoration, and is coining money at the Chamber, but his Royalism is less pure than that of the rival house; he takes the "Gazette" and the "Débats," the other family only read the "Quotidienne."

His lordship the Bishop, a sometime Vicar-General, fluctuates between the two powers, who pay him the respect due to religion, but at times they bring home to him the moral appended by the worthy La Fontaine to the fable of the "Ass laden with Relics." The good man's origin is distinctly plebeian.

Then come stars of the second magnitude, men of family with ten or twelve hundred livres a year, captains in the navy or cavalry regiments, or nothing at all. Out on the roads, on horseback, they rank half-way between the curé bearing the sacraments and the tax-collector on his rounds. Pretty nearly all of them have been in the Pages or in the Household Troops, and now are peaceably ending their days in a *faisance-valoir*, more interested in felling timber and the cider prospects than in the Monarchy.

Still they talk of the Charter and the Liberals while the cards are making, or over a game at backgammon, when they have exhausted the usual stock topic of *dots*, and have married everybody off according to the genealogies which they

all know by heart. Their womenkind are haughty dames, who assume the airs of Court ladies in their basket chaises. They huddle themselves up in shawls and caps by way of full dress; and twice a year, after ripe deliberation, have a new bonnet from Paris, brought as opportunity offers. Exemplary wives are they for the most part, and garrulous.

These are the principal elements of aristocratic gentility, with a few outlying old maids of good family, spinsters who have solved the problem: given a human being, to remain absolutely stationary. They might be sealed up in the houses where you see them; their faces and their dresses are literally part of the fixtures of the town, and the province in which they dwell. They are its tradition, its memory, its quintessence, the *genius loci* incarnate. There is something frigid and monumental about these ladies; they know exactly when to laugh and when to shake their heads, and every now and then give out some utterance which passes current as a witticism.

A few rich townspeople have crept into the miniature Faubourg Saint-Germain, thanks to their money or their aristocratic leanings. But despite their forty years, the circle still say of them, "Young So-and-so has sound opinions," and of such do they make deputies. As a rule, the elderly spinsters are their patronesses, not without comment.

Finally, in this exclusive little set include two or three ecclesiastics, admitted for the sake of their cloth, or for their wit; for these great nobles find their own society rather dull, and introduce the bourgeois element into their drawing-rooms, as a baker puts leaven into his dough.

The sum-total contained by all heads put together consists of a certain quantity of antiquated notions; a few new reflections brewed in company of an evening being added from time to time to the common stock. Like sea-water in a little creek, the phrases which represent these ideas surge up daily, punctually obeying the tidal laws of conversation in their flow and ebb; you hear the hollow echo of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, a year hence, and for evermore. On

all things here below they pass immutable judgments, which go to make up a body of tradition into which no power of mortal man can infuse one drop of wit or sense. The lives of these persons revolve with the regularity of clockwork in an orbit of use and wont which admits of no more deviation or change than their opinions on matters religious, political, moral, or literary.

If a stranger is admitted to the *cénacle*, every member of it in turn will say (not without a trace of irony), "You will not find the brilliancy of your Parisian society here," and proceed forthwith to criticise the life led by his neighbors, as if he himself were an exception who had striven, and vainly striven, to enlighten the rest. But any stranger so ill advised as to concur in any of their freely expressed criticism of each other is pronounced at once to be an ill-natured person, a heathen, an outlaw, a reprobate Parisian "as Parisians mostly are."

Before Gaston de Nueil made his appearance in this little world of strictly observed etiquette, where every detail of life is an integrant part of a whole, and everything is known; where the values of personalty and real estate are quoted like stocks on the last sheet of the newspaper—before his arrival he had been weighed in the unerring scales of Bayeusaine judgment.

His cousin, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère, had already given out the amount of his fortune, and the sum of his expectations, had produced the family tree, and expatiated on the talents, breeding, and modesty of this particular branch. So he received the precise amount of attention to which he was entitled; he was accepted as a worthy scion of a good stock; and, for he was but twenty-three, was made welcome without ceremony, though certain young ladies and mothers of daughters looked not unkindly upon him.

He had an income of eighteen thousand livres from land in the valley of the Auge; and sooner or later his father, as in duty bound, would leave him the chateau of Manerville, with the lands thereunto belonging. As for his education,

political career, personal qualities, and qualifications—no one so much as thought of raising the questions. His land was undeniable, his rentals steady; excellent plantations had been made; the tenants paid for repairs, rates, and taxes; the apple-trees were thirty-eight years old; and, to crown all, his father was in treaty for two hundred acres of woodland just outside the paternal park, which he intended to inclose with walls. No hopes of a political career, no fame on earth, can compare with such advantages as these.

Whether out of malice or design, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère omitted to mention that Gaston had an elder brother; nor did Gaston himself say a word about him. But, at the same time, it is true that the brother was consumptive, and to all appearance would shortly be laid in earth, lamented and forgotten.

At first Gaston de Nueil amused himself at the expense of the circle. He drew, as it were, for his mental album, a series of portraits of these folk, with their angular, wrinkled faces and hooked noses, their crotchets and ludicrous eccentricities of dress, portraits which possessed all the racy flavor of truth. He delighted in their "Normanisms," in the primitive quaintness of their ideas and characters. For a short time he flung himself into their squirrel's life of busy gyrations in a cage. Then he began to feel the want of variety, and grew tired of it. It was like the life of the cloister, cut short before it had well begun. He drifted on till he reached a crisis, which is neither spleen nor disgust, but combines all the symptoms of both. When a human being is transplanted into an uncongenial soil, to lead a starved, stunted existence, there is always a little discomfort over the transition. Then, gradually, if nothing removes him from his surroundings, he grows accustomed to them, and adapts himself to the vacuity which grows upon him and renders him powerless. Even now, Gaston's lungs were accustomed to the air; and he was willing to discern a kind of vegetable happiness in days that brought no mental exertion and no responsibilities. The constant stirring of the sap

of life, the fertilizing influences of mind on mind, after which he had sought so eagerly in Paris, were beginning to fade from his memory, and he was in a fair way of becoming a fossil with these fossils, and ending his days among them, content, like the companions of Ulysses, in his gross envelope.

One evening Gaston de Nueil was seated between a dowager and one of the vicars general of the diocese, in a gray-panelled drawing-room, floored with large, white tiles. The family portraits which adorned the walls looked down upon four card-tables, and some sixteen persons gathered about them, chattering over their whist. Gaston, thinking of nothing, digesting one of those exquisite dinners to which the provincial looks forward all through the day, found himself justifying the customs of the country.

He began to understand why these good folk continued to play with yesterday's pack of cards and shuffled them on a threadbare tablecloth, and how it was that they had ceased to dress for themselves or others. He saw the glimmerings of something like a philosophy in the even tenor of their perpetual round, in the calm of their methodical monotony, in their ignorance of the refinements of luxury. Indeed, he almost came to think that luxury profited nothing; and even now, the city of Paris, with its passions, storms, and pleasures, was scarcely more than a memory of childhood.

He admired in all sincerity the red hands and shy, bashful manner of some young lady who at first struck him as an awkward simpleton, unattractive to the last degree, and surpassingly ridiculous. His doom was sealed. He had gone from the provinces to Paris; he had led the feverish life of Paris; and now he would have sunk back into the lifeless life of the provinces, but for a chance remark which reached his ear—a few words that called up a swift rush of such emotion as he might have felt when a strain of really great music mingles with the accompaniment of some tedious opera.

"You went to call on Mme. de Beauséant yesterday, did

you not?" The speaker was an elderly lady, and she addressed the head of the local royal family.

"I went this morning. She was so poorly and depressed that I could not persuade her to dine with us to-morrow."

"With Mme. de Champignelles?" exclaimed the dowager, with something like astonishment in her manner.

"With my wife," calmly assented the noble. "Mme. de Beauséant is descended from the House of Burgundy, on the spindle side, 'tis true, but the name atones for everything. My wife is very much attached to the Vicomtesse, and the poor lady has lived alone for such a long while, that—"

The Marquis de Champignelles looked round about him while he spoke with an air of cool unconcern, so that it was almost impossible to guess whether he made a concession to Mme. de Beauséant's misfortunes, or paid homage to her noble birth; whether he felt flattered to receive her in his house, or, on the contrary, sheer pride was the motive that led him to try to force the country families to meet the Vicomtesse.

The women appeared to take counsel of each other by a glance; there was a sudden silence in the room, and it was felt that their attitude was one of disapproval.

"Does this Mme. de Beauséant happen to be the lady whose adventure with M. d'Ajuda-Pinto made so much noise?" asked Gaston of his neighbor.

"The very same," he was told. "She came to Courcelles after the marriage of the Marquis d'Ajuda; nobody visits her. She has, besides, too much sense not to see that she is in a false position, so she has made no attempt to see any one. M. de Champignelles and a few gentlemen went to call upon her, but she would see none but M. de Champignelles, perhaps because he is a connection of the family. They are related through the Beauséants; the father of the present Vicomte married a Mlle. de Champignelles of the older branch. But though the Vicomtesse de Beauséant is supposed to be a descendant of the House of Burgundy, you can understand that we could not admit a wife separated

from her husband into our society here. We are foolish enough still to cling to these old-fashioned ideas. There was the less excuse for the Vicomtesse, because M. de Beauséant is a well-bred man of the world, who would have been quite ready to listen to reason. But his wife is quite mad—" and so forth and so forth.

M. de Nueil, still listening to the speaker's voice, gathered nothing of the sense of the words, his brain was too full of thick-coming fancies. Fancies? What other name can you give to the alluring charms of an adventure that tempts the imagination and sets vague hopes springing up in the soul; to the sense of coming events and mysterious felicity and fear at hand, while as yet there is no substance of fact on which these phantoms of caprice can fix and feed? Over these fancies thought hovers, conceiving impossible projects, giving in the germ all the joys of love. Perhaps, indeed, all passion is contained in that thought germ, as the beauty, and fragrance, and rich color of the flower is all packed in the seed.

M. de Nueil did not know that Mme. de Beauséant had taken refuge in Normandy, after a notoriety which women for the most part envy and condemn, especially when youth and beauty in some sort excuse the transgression. Any sort of celebrity bestows an inconceivable prestige. Apparently for women, as for families, the glory of the crime effaces the stain; and if such and such a noble house is proud of its tale of heads that have fallen on the scaffold, a young and pretty woman becomes more interesting for the dubious renown of a happy love or a scandalous desertion, and the more she is to be pitied the more she excites our sympathies. We are only pitiless to the commonplace. If, moreover, we attract all eyes, we are to all intents and purposes great; how, indeed, are we to be seen unless we raise ourselves above other people's heads? The common herd of humanity feels an involuntary respect for any person who can rise above it, and is not over particular as to the means by which they rise.

It may have been that some such motives influenced Gaston de Nueil at unawares, or perhaps it was curiosity, or a craving for some interest in his life; or, in a word, that crowd of inexplicable impulses which, for want of a better name, we are wont to call "fatality," that drew him to Mme. de Beauséant.

The figure of the Vicomtesse de Beauséant rose up suddenly before him with gracious thronging associations. She was a new world for him, a world of fears and hopes, a world to fight for and to conquer. Inevitably he felt the contrast between this vision and the human beings in the shabby room; and then, in truth, she was a woman; what woman had he seen so far in this dull, little world, where calculation replaced thought and feeling, where courtesy was a cut-and-dried formality, and ideas of the very simplest were too alarming to be received or to pass current? The sound of Mme. de Beauséant's name revived a young man's dreams and wakened urgent desires that had lain dormant for a little.

Gaston de Nueil was absent-minded and preoccupied for the rest of that evening. He was pondering how he might gain access to Mme. de Beauséant, and truly it was no very easy matter. She was believed to be extremely clever. But if men and women of parts may be captivated by something subtle or eccentric, they are also exacting, and can read all that lies below the surface; and after the first step has been taken, the chances of failure and success in the difficult task of pleasing them are about even. In this particular case, moreover, the Vicomtesse, besides the pride of her position, had all the dignity of her name. Her utter seclusion was the least of the barriers raised between her and the world. For which reasons it was wellnigh impossible that a stranger, however well born, could hope for admittance; and yet, the next morning found M. de Nueil taking his walks abroad in the direction of Courcelles, a dupe of illusions natural at his age. Several times he made the circuit of the garden walls, looking earnestly through every gap at the

closed shutters or open windows, hoping for some romantic chance, on which he founded schemes for introducing himself into this unknown lady's presence, without a thought of their impracticability. Morning after morning was spent in this way to mighty little purpose; but with each day's walk, that vision of a woman living apart from the world, of love's martyr buried in solitude, loomed larger in his thoughts, and was enshrined in his soul. So Gaston de Nueil walked under the walls of Courcelles, and some gardener's heavy footstep would set his heart beating high with hope.

He thought of writing to Mme. de Beauséant, but on mature consideration, what can you say to a woman whom you have never seen, a complete stranger? And Gaston had little self-confidence. Like most young persons with a plentiful crop of illusions still standing, he dreaded the mortifying contempt of silence more than death itself, and shuddered at the thought of sending his first tender epistle forth to face so many chances of being thrown on the fire. He was distracted by innumerable conflicting ideas. But by dint of inventing chimeras, weaving romances, and cudgelling his brains, he hit at last upon one of the hopeful stratagems that are sure to occur to your mind if you persevere long enough, a stratagem which must make clear to the most inexperienced woman that here was a man who took a fervent interest in her. The caprice of social conventions puts as many barriers between lovers as any Oriental imagination can devise in the most delightfully fantastic tale; indeed, the most extravagant pictures are seldom exaggerations. In real life, as in the fairy tales, the woman belongs to him who can reach her and set her free from the position in which she languishes. The poorest of calenders that ever fell in love with the daughter of the Khalif is in truth scarcely further from his lady than Gaston de Nueil from Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse knew absolutely nothing of M. de Nueil's wanderings round her house; Gaston de Nueil's love grew to the height of the obstacles to

overleap; and the distance set between him and his extemporized lady-love produced the usual effect of distance, in lending enchantment.

One day, confident in his inspiration, he hoped everything from the love that must pour forth from his eyes. Spoken words, in his opinion, were more eloquent than the most passionate letter; and, besides, he would engage feminine curiosity to plead for him. He went, therefore, to M. de Champignelles, proposing to employ that gentleman for the better success of his enterprise. He informed the Marquis that he had been intrusted with a delicate and important commission which concerned the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, that he felt doubtful whether she would read a letter written in an unknown handwriting, or put confidence in a stranger. Would M. de Champignelles, on his next visit, ask the Vicomtesse if she would consent to receive him—Gaston de Nueil? While he asked the Marquis to keep his secret in case of a refusal, he very ingeniously insinuated sufficient reasons for his own admittance, to be duly passed on to the Vicomtesse. Was not M. de Champignelles a man of honor, a loyal gentleman incapable of lending himself to any transaction in bad taste, nay, the merest suspicion of bad taste! Love lends a young man all the self-possession and astute craft of an old ambassador; all the Marquis's harmless vanities were gratified, and the haughty grandee was completely duped. He tried hard to fathom Gaston's secret; but the latter, who would have been greatly perplexed to tell it, turned off M. de Champignelles' adroit questioning with a Norman's shrewdness, till the Marquis, as a gallant Frenchman, complimented his young visitor upon his discretion.

M. de Champignelles hurried off at once to Courcelles, with that eagerness to serve a pretty woman which belongs to his time of life. In the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's position, such a message was likely to arouse keen curiosity; so, although her memory supplied no reason at all that could bring M. de Nueil to her house, she saw no objection to his

visit—after some prudent inquiries as to his family and condition. At the same time, she began by a refusal. Then she discussed the propriety of the matter with M. de Champignelles, directing her questions so as to discover, if possible, whether he knew the motives for the visit, and finally revoked her negative answer. The discussion and the discretion shown perforce by the Marquis had piqued her curiosity.

M. de Champignelles had no mind to cut a ridiculous figure. He said with the air of a man who can keep another's counsel, that the Vicomtesse must know the purpose of this visit perfectly well; while the Vicomtesse, in all sincerity, had no notion what it could be. Mme. de Beauséant, in perplexity, connected Gaston with people whom he had never met, went astray after various wild conjectures, and asked herself if she had seen this M. de Nueil before. In truth, no love letter, however sincere or skilfully indited, could have produced so much effect as this riddle. Again and again Mme. de Beauséant puzzled over it.

When Gaston heard that he might call upon the Vicomtesse, his rapture at so soon obtaining the ardently longed-for good fortune was mingled with singular embarrassment. How was he to contrive a suitable sequel to this stratagem?

"Bah! I shall see *her*," he said over and over again to himself as he dressed. "See her, and that is everything!"

He fell to hoping that once across the threshold of Courcelles he should find an expedient for unfastening this Gordian knot of his own tying. There are believers in the omnipotence of necessity who never turn back; the close presence of danger is an inspiration that calls out all their powers for victory. Gaston de Nueil was one of these.

He took particular pains with his dress, imagining, as youth is apt to imagine, that success or failure hangs on the position of a curl, and ignorant of the fact that anything is charming in youth. And, in any case, such women as Mme. de Beauséant are only attracted by the charms of wit or character of an unusual order. Greatness of character flatters

their vanity, promises a great passion, seems to imply a comprehension of the requirements of their hearts. Wit amuses them, responds to the subtlety of their natures, and they think that they are understood. And what do all women wish but to be amused, understood, or adored? It is only after much reflection on the things of life that we understand the consummate coquetry of neglect of dress and reserve at a first interview; and by the time we have gained sufficient astuteness for successful strategy, we are too old to profit by our experience.

While Gaston's lack of confidence in his mental equipment drove him to borrow charms from his clothes, Mme. de Beauséant herself was instinctively giving more attention to her toilet.

"I would rather not frighten people, at all events," she said to herself as she arranged her hair.

In M. de Nueil's character, person, and manner there was that touch of unconscious originality which gives a kind of flavor to things that any one might say or do, and absolves everything that they may choose to do or say. He was highly cultivated, he had a keen brain, and a face, mobile as his own nature, which won the goodwill of others. The promise of passion and tenderness in the bright eyes was fulfilled by an essentially kindly heart. The resolution which he made as he entered the house at Courcelles was in keeping with his frank nature and ardent imagination. But, bold as he was with love, his heart beat violently when he had crossed the great court, laid out like an English garden, and the manservant, who had taken his name to the Vicomtesse, returned to say that she would receive him.

"M. le Baron de Nueil."

Gaston came in slowly, but with sufficient ease of manner; and it is a more difficult thing, be it said, to enter a room where there is but one woman, than a room that holds a score.

A great fire was burning on the hearth in spite of the mild weather, and by the soft light of the candles in the sconces he saw a young woman sitting on a high-backed

bergère in the angle by the hearth. The seat was so low that she could move her head freely; every turn of it was full of grace and delicate charm, whether she bent, leaning forward, or raised and held it erect, slowly and languidly, as though it were a heavy burden, so low that she could cross her feet and let them appear, or draw them back under the folds of a long, black dress.

The Vicomtesse made as if she would lay the book that she was reading on a small, round stand; but as she did so, she turned toward M. de Nueil, and the volume, insecurely laid upon the edge, fell to the ground between the stand and the sofa. This did not seem to disconcert her. She looked up, bowing almost imperceptibly in response to his greeting, without rising from the depths of the low chair in which she lay. Bending forward, she stirred the fire briskly, and stooped to pick up a fallen glove, drawing it mechanically over her left hand, while her eyes wandered in search of its fellow. The glance was instantly checked, however, for she stretched out a thin, white, all-but-transparent right hand, with flawless ovals of rose-colored nail at the tips of the slender, ringless fingers, and pointed to a chair as if to bid Gaston be seated. He sat down, and she turned her face questioningly toward him. Words cannot describe the subtlety of the winning charm and inquiry in that gesture; deliberate in its kindliness, gracious yet accurate in expression, it was the outcome of early education and of a constant use and wont of the graciousnesses of life. Those movements of hers, so swift, so deft, succeeded each other so smoothly that Gaston de Nueil was fascinated by the blending of a pretty woman's fastidious carelessness with the high-bred manner of a great lady.

Mme. de Beauséant stood out in such strong contrast against the automatons among whom he had spent two months of exile in that out-of-the-world district of Normandy, that he could not but find in her the realization of his romantic dreams; and, on the other hand, he could not compare her perfections with those of other women whom he had

formerly admired. Here in her presence, in a drawing-room like some salon in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, full of costly trifles lying about upon the tables, and flowers and books, he felt as if he were back in Paris. It was a real Parisian carpet beneath his feet, he saw once more the high-bred type of Parisienne, the fragile outlines of her form, her exquisite charm, her disdain of the studied effects which do so much to spoil provincial women.

Mme. de Beauséant had fair hair and dark eyes, and the pale complexion that belongs to fair hair. She held up her brow nobly like some fallen angel, grown proud through the fall, disdainful of pardon. Her way of gathering her thick hair into a crown of plaits above the broad, curving lines of the bandeaux upon her forehead, added to the queenliness of her face. Imagination could discover the ducal coronet of Burgundy in the spiral threads of her golden hair; all the courage of her house seemed to gleam from the great lady's brilliant eyes, such courage as women use to repel audacity or scorn, for they were full of tenderness for gentleness. The outline of that little head, so admirably poised above the long, white throat, the delicate, fine features, the subtle curves of the lips, the mobile face itself, wore an expression of delicate discretion, a faint semblance of irony suggestive of craft and insolence. Yet it would have been difficult to refuse forgiveness to those two feminine failings in her; for the lines that came out in her forehead whenever her face was not in repose, like her upward glances (that pathetic trick of manner), told unmistakably of unhappiness, of a passion that had all but cost her her life. A woman, sitting in the great, silent salon, a woman cut off from the rest of the world in this remote little valley, alone, with the memories of her brilliant, happy, and impassioned youth, of continual gayety and homage paid on all sides, now replaced by the horrors of the void—was there not something in the sight to strike awe that deepened with reflection? Consciousness of her own value lurked in her smile. She was neither wife nor mother, she was an outlaw; she had lost the one heart that

could set her pulses beating without shame; she had nothing from without to support her reeling soul; she must ever look for strength from within, live her own life, cherish no hope save that of forsaken love, which looks forward to Death's coming, and hastens his lagging footsteps. And this while life was in its prime. Oh! to feel destined for happiness and to die—never having given nor received it! A woman too! What pain was this! These thoughts, flashing across M. de Nueil's mind like lightning, left him very humble in the presence of the greatest charm with which woman can be invested. The triple aureole of beauty, nobleness, and misfortune dazzled him; he stood in dreamy, almost open-mouthed, admiration of the Vicomtesse. But he found nothing to say to her.

Mme. de Beauséant, by no means displeased, no doubt, by his surprise, held out her hand with a kindly but imperious gesture; then, summoning a smile to her pale lips, as if obeying, even yet, the woman's impulse to be gracious: "I have heard from M. de Champignelles of a message which you have kindly undertaken to deliver, monsieur," she said. "Can it be from—"

With that terrible phrase Gaston understood, even more clearly than before, his own ridiculous position, the bad taste and bad faith of his behavior toward a woman so noble and so unfortunate. He reddened. The thoughts that crowded in upon him could be read in his troubled eyes; but suddenly, with the courage which youth draws from a sense of its own wrongdoing, he gained confidence, and very humbly interrupted Mme. de Beauséant.

"Madame," he faltered out, "I do not deserve the happiness of seeing you. I have deceived you basely. However strong the motive may have been, it can never excuse the pitiful subterfuge which I used to gain my end. But, madame, if your goodness will permit me to tell you—"

The Vicomtesse glanced at M. de Nueil, haughty disdain in her whole manner. She stretched her hand to the bell and rang it.

"Jacques," she said, "light this gentleman to the door," and she looked with dignity at the visitor.

She rose proudly, bowed to Gaston, and then stooped for the fallen volume. If all her movements on his entrance had been caressingly dainty and gracious, her every gesture now was no less severely frigid. M. de Nueil rose to his feet, but he stood waiting. Mme. de Beauséant flung another glance at him. "Well, why do you not go?" she seemed to say.

There was such cutting irony in that glance that Gaston grew white as if he were about to faint. Tears came into his eyes, but he would not let them fall, and scorching shame and despair dried them. He looked back at Mme. de Beauséant, and a certain pride and consciousness of his own worth was mingled with his humility; the Vicomtesse had a right to punish him, but ought she to use her right? Then he went out.

As he crossed the antechamber, a clear head, and wits sharpened by passion, were not slow to grasp the danger of his situation.

"If I leave this house, I can never come back to it again," he said to himself. "The Vicomtesse will always think of me as a fool. It is impossible that a woman, and such a woman, should not guess the love that she has called forth. Perhaps she feels a little, vague, involuntary regret for dismissing me so abruptly.—But she could not do otherwise, and she cannot recall her sentence. It rests with me to understand her."

At that thought Gaston stopped short on the flight of steps with an exclamation; he turned sharply, saying, "I have forgotten something," and went back to the salon. The lackey, all respect for a baron and the rights of property, was completely deceived by the natural utterance, and followed him. Gaston returned quietly and unannounced. The Vicomtesse, thinking that the intruder was the servant, looked up and beheld M. de Nueil.

"Jacques lighted me to the door," he said, with a half-sad smile which dispelled any suspicion of jest in those

words, while the tone in which they were spoken went to the heart. Mme. de Beauséant was disarmed.

"Very well, take a seat," she said.

Gaston eagerly took possession of a chair. His eyes were shining with happiness; the Vicomtesse, unable to endure the brilliant light in them, looked down at the book. She was enjoying a delicious, ever-new sensation; the sense of a man's delight in her presence is an unfailing feminine instinct. And then, besides, he had divined her, and a woman is so grateful to the man who has mastered the apparently capricious, yet logical, reasoning of her heart; who can track her thought through the seemingly contradictory workings of her mind, and read the sensations, or shy or bold, written in fleeting red, a bewildering maze of coquetry and self-revelation.

"Madame," Gaston exclaimed in a low voice, "my blunder you know, but you do not know how much I am to blame. If you only knew what joy it was to—"

"Ah! take care," she said, holding up one finger with an air of mystery, as she put out her hand toward the bell.

The charming gesture, the gracious threat, no doubt, called up some sad thought, some memory of the old happy time when she could be wholly charming and gentle without an afterthought; when the gladness of her heart justified every caprice, and put charm into every least movement. The lines in her forehead gathered between her brows, and the expression of her face grew dark in the soft candle-light. Then looking across at M. de Nueil gravely but not unkindly, she spoke like a woman who deeply feels the meaning of every word.

"This is all very ridiculous! Once upon a time, monsieur, when thoughtless high spirits were my privilege, I should have laughed fearlessly over your visit with you. But now my life is very much changed. I cannot do as I like, I am obliged to think. What brings you here? Is it curiosity? In that case I am paying dearly for a little fleeting pleasure. Have you fallen *passionately* in love already

with a woman whom you have never seen, a woman with whose name slander has, of course, been busy? If so, your motive in making this visit is based on disrespect, on an error which accident brought into notoriety."

She flung her book down scornfully upon the table, then, with a terrible look at Gaston, she went on: "Because I once was weak, must it be supposed that I am always weak? This is horrible, degrading. Or have you come here to pity me? You are very young to offer sympathy with heart troubles. Understand this clearly, sir, that I would rather have scorn than pity. I will not endure compassion from any one."

There was a brief pause.

"Well, sir," she continued (and the face that she turned to him was gentle and sad), "whatever motive induced this rash intrusion upon my solitude, it is very painful to me, you see. You are too young to be totally without good feeling, so surely you will feel that this behavior of yours is improper. I forgive you for it, and, as you see, I am speaking of it to you without bitterness. You will not come here again, will you? I am entreating when I might command. If you come to see me again, neither you nor I can prevent the whole place from believing that you are my lover, and you would cause me great additional annoyance. You do not mean to do that, I think."

She said no more, but looked at him with a great dignity which abashed him.

"I have done wrong, madame," he said, with deep feeling in his voice, "but it was through enthusiasm and thoughtlessness and eager desire of happiness, the qualities and defects of my age. Now, I understand that I ought not to have tried to see you," he added; "but, at the same time, the desire was a very natural one"—and making an appeal to feeling rather than to the intellect, he described the weariness of his enforced exile. He drew a portrait of a young man in whom the fires of life were burning themselves out, conveying the impression that here was a heart worthy of tender love, a heart which,

notwithstanding, had never known the joys of love for a young and beautiful woman of refinement and taste. He explained, without attempting to justify, his unusual conduct. He flattered Mme. de Beauséant by showing that she had realized for him the ideal lady of a young man's dream, the ideal sought by so many, and so often sought in vain. Then he touched upon his morning prowlings under the walls of Courcelles, and his wild thoughts at the first sight of the house, till he excited that vague feeling of indulgence which a woman can find in her heart for the follies committed for her sake.

An impassioned voice was speaking in the chill solitude; the speaker brought with him a warm breath of youth and the charms of a carefully cultivated mind. It was so long since Mme. de Beauséant had felt stirred by real feeling delicately expressed that it affected her very strongly now. In spite of herself, she watched M. de Nueil's expressive face, and admired the noble confidence of a soul, unbroken as yet by the cruel discipline of the life of the world, unfretted by continual scheming to gratify personal ambition and vanity. Gaston was in the flower of his youth, he impressed her as a man with something in him; unaware as yet of the great career that lay before him. So both these two made reflections most dangerous for their peace of mind, and both strove to conceal their thoughts. M. de Nueil saw in the Vicomtesse a rare type of woman, always the victim of her perfection and tenderness; her graceful beauty is the least of her charms for those who are privileged to know the infinite of feeling and thought and goodness in the soul within; a woman whose instinctive feeling for beauty runs through all the most varied expressions of love, purifying its transports, turning them to something almost holy; wonderful secret of womanhood, the exquisite gift that Nature so seldom bestows. And the Vicomtesse, on her side, listening to the ring of sincerity in Gaston's voice, while he told of his youthful troubles, began to understand all that grown children of

five-and twenty suffer from diffidence, when hard work has kept them alike from corrupting influences and intercourse with men and women of the world whose sophistical reasoning and experience destroy the fair qualities of youth. Here was the ideal of women's dreams, a man unspoiled as yet by the egoism of family or success, or by that narrow selfishness which blights the first impulses of honor, devotion, self-sacrifice, and high demands of self; all the flowers so soon wither that enrich at first the life of delicate but strong emotions, and keep alive the loyalty of the heart.

But these two, once launched forth into the vast of sentiment, went far indeed in theory, sounding the depths in either soul, testing the sincerity of their expressions; only, whereas Gaston's experiments were made unconsciously, Mme. de Beauséant had a purpose in all that she said. Bringing her natural and acquired subtlety to the work, she sought to learn M. de Nueil's opinions by advancing, as far as she could do so, views diametrically opposed to her own. So witty and so gracious was she, so much herself with this stranger, with whom she felt completely at ease, because she felt sure that they should never meet again, that, after some delicious epigram of hers, Gaston exclaimed unthinkingly: "'Oh! madame, how could any man have left you?'"

The Vicomtesse was silent. Gaston reddened, he thought that he had offended her; but she was not angry. The first deep thrill of delight since the day of her calamity had taken her by surprise. The skill of the cleverest *roué* could not have made the impression that M. de Nueil made with that cry from the heart. That verdict wrung from a young man's candor gave her back innocence in her own eyes, condemned the world, laid the blame upon the lover who had left her, and justified her subsequent solitary drooping life. The world's absolution, the heartfelt sympathy, the social esteem so longed for, and so harshly refused, nay, all her secret desires were given her to the full in that exclamation, made fairer yet by the heart's sweet-

est flatteries and the admiration that women always relish eagerly. He understood her, understood all, and he had given her, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the opportunity of rising higher through her fall. She looked at the clock.

"Ah! madame, do not punish me for my heedlessness. If you grant me but one evening, vouchsafe not to shorten it."

She smiled at the pretty speech.

"Well, as we must never meet again," she said, "what signifies a moment more or less? If you were to care for me, it would be a pity."

"It is too late now," he said.

"Do not tell me that," she answered gravely. "Under any other circumstances I should be very glad to see you. I will speak frankly, and you will understand how it is that I do not choose to see you again, and ought not to do so. You have too much magnanimity not to feel that if I were so much as suspected of a second trespass, every one would think of me as a contemptible and vulgar woman; I should be like other women. A pure and blameless life will bring my character into relief. I am too proud not to endeavor to live like one apart in the world, a victim of the law through my marriage, man's victim through my love. If I were not faithful to the position which I have taken up, then I should deserve all the reproach that is heaped upon me; I should be lowered in my own eyes. I had not enough lofty social virtue to remain with a man whom I did not love. I have snapped the bonds of marriage in spite of the law; it was wrong, it was a crime, it was anything you like, but for me the bonds meant death. I meant to live. Perhaps if I had been a mother I could have endured the torture of a forced marriage of suitability. At eighteen we scarcely know what is done with us, poor girls that we are! I have broken the laws of the world, and the world has punished me; we both did rightly. I sought happiness. Is it not a law of our nature to seek for happiness?

I was young, I was beautiful . . . I thought that I had found a nature as loving, as apparently passionate. I was loved indeed; for a little while . . ." She paused.

"I used to think," she said, "that no one could leave a woman in such a position as mine. I have been forsaken; I must have offended in some way. Yes, in some way, no doubt, I failed to keep some law of our nature, was too loving, too devoted, too exacting—I do not know. Evil days have brought light with them? For a long while I blamed another, now I am content to bear the whole blame. At my own expense, I have absolved that other of whom I once thought I had a right to complain. I had not the art to keep him; fate has punished me heavily for my lack of skill. I only knew how to love; how can one keep one's self in mind when one loves? So I was a slave when I should have sought to be a tyrant. Those who know me may condemn me, but they will respect me too. Pain has taught me that I must not lay myself open to this a second time. I cannot understand how it is that I am living yet, after the anguish of that first week of the most fearful crisis in a woman's life. Only from three years of loneliness would it be possible to draw strength to speak of that time as I am speaking now. Such agony, monsieur, usually ends in death; but this—well, it was the agony of death with no tomb to end it. Oh! I have known pain indeed!"

The Vicomtesse raised her beautiful eyes to the ceiling; and the cornice, no doubt, received all the confidences which a stranger might not hear. When a woman is afraid to look at her interlocutor, there is in truth no gentler, meeker, more accommodating confidante than the cornice. The cornice is quite an institution in the boudoir; what is it but the confessional, *minus* the priest?

Mme. de Beauséant was eloquent and beautiful at that moment; nay, "coquettish," if the word were not too heavy. By justifying herself, by raising insurmountable barriers between herself and love, she was stimulating every senti-

ment in the man before her; nay, more, the higher she set the goal, the more conspicuous it grew. At last, when her eyes had lost the too eloquent expression given to them by painful memories, she let them fall on Gaston.

"You acknowledge, do you not, that I am bound to lead a solitary, self-contained life?" she said quietly.

So sublime was she in her reasoning and her madness, that M. de Nueil felt a wild longing to throw himself at her feet; but he was afraid of making himself ridiculous, so he held his enthusiasm and his thoughts in check. He was afraid, too, that he might totally fail to express them, and in no less terror of some awful rejection on her part, or of her mockery, an apprehension which strikes like ice to the most fervid soul. The revulsion which led him to crush down every feeling as it sprang up in his heart cost him the intense pain that diffident and ambitious natures experience in the frequent crises when they are compelled to stifle their longings. And yet, in spite of himself, he broke the silence to say in a faltering voice:

"Madame, permit me to give way to one of the strongest emotions of my life, and own to all that you have made me feel. You set the heart in me swelling high! I feel within me a longing to make you forget your mortifications, to devote my life to this, to give you love for all who ever have given you wounds or hate. But this is a very sudden outpouring of the heart, nothing can justify it to day, and I ought not—"

"Enough, monsieur," said Mme. de Beauséant; "we have both of us gone too far. By giving you the sad reasons for a refusal which I am compelled to give, I meant to soften it and not to elicit homage. Coquetry only suits a happy woman. Believe me, we must remain strangers to each other. At a later day you will know that ties which must inevitably be broken ought not to be formed at all."

She sighed lightly, and her brows contracted, but almost immediately grew clear again.

"How painful it is for a woman to be powerless to follow the man she loves through all the phases of his life! And if that man loves her truly, his heart must surely vibrate with pain to the deep trouble in hers. Are they not twice unhappy?"

There was a short pause. Then she rose smiling.

"You little suspected, when you came to Courcelles, that you were to hear a sermon, did you?"

Gaston felt even further than at first from this extraordinary woman. Was the charm of that delightful hour due after all to the coquetry of the mistress of the house? She had been anxious to display her wit. He bowed stiffly to the Vicomtesse, and went away in desperation.

On the way home he tried to detect the real character of a creature supple and hard as a steel spring; but he had seen her pass through so many phases that he could not make up his mind about her. The tones of her voice, too, were ringing in his ears; her gestures, the little movements of her head, and the varying expression of her eyes grew more gracious in memory, more fascinating as he thought of them. The Vicomtesse's beauty shone out again for him in the darkness; his reviving impressions called up yet others, and he was inthralled anew by womanly charm and wit, which at first he had not perceived. He fell to wandering musings, in which the most lucid thoughts grow refractory and flatly contradict each other, and the soul passes through a brief frenzy fit. Youth only can understand all that lies in the dithyrambic outpourings of youth when, after a stormy siege of the most frantic folly and coolest common-sense, the heart finally yields to the assault of the latest comer, be it hope, or despair, as some mysterious power determines.

At three-and-twenty, diffidence nearly always rules a man's conduct; he is perplexed with a young girl's shyness, a girl's trouble; he is afraid lest he should express his love ill, sees nothing but difficulties, and takes alarm at them; he would be bolder if he loved less, for he has no confidence

in himself, and with a growing sense of the cost of happiness comes a conviction that the woman he loves cannot easily be won; perhaps, too, he is giving himself up too entirely to his own pleasure, and fears that he can give none; and when, for his misfortune, his idol inspires him with awe, he worships in secret and afar, and unless his love is guessed, it dies away. Then it often happens that one of these dead early loves lingers on, bright with illusions in many a young heart. What man is there but keeps within him these virgin memories that grow fairer every time they rise before him, memories that hold up to him the ideal of perfect bliss? Such recollections are like children who die in the flower of childhood, before their parents have known anything of them but their smiles.

So M. de Nueil came home from Courcelles, the victim of a mood fraught with desperate resolutions. Even now he felt that Mme. de Beauséant was one of the conditions of his existence, and that death would be preferable to life without her. He was still young enough to feel the tyrannous fascination which fully-developed womanhood exerts over immature and impassioned natures; and, consequently, he was to spend one of those stormy nights when a young man's thoughts travel from happiness to suicide and back again—nights in which youth rushes through a lifetime of bliss and falls asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fateful nights are they, and the worst misfortune that can happen is to awake a philosopher afterward. M. de Nueil was far too deeply in love to sleep; he rose and betook to inditing letters, but none of them were satisfactory, and he burned them all.

The next day he went to Courcelles to make the circuit of her garden walls, but he waited till nightfall; he was afraid that she might see him. The instinct that led him to act in this way arose out of so obscure a mood of the soul, that none but a young man, or a man in like case, can fully understand its mute ecstasies and its vagaries, matter to set those people who are lucky enough to see life only in

its matter-of-fact aspect shrugging their shoulders. After painful hesitation, Gaston wrote to Mme. de Beauséant. Here is the letter, which may serve as a sample of the epistolary style peculiar to lovers, a performance which, like the drawings prepared with great secrecy by children for the birthdays of father or mother, is found insufferable by every mortal except the recipients:

"MADAME—Your power over my heart, my soul, myself, is so great that my fate depends wholly upon you to-day. Do not throw this letter into the fire; be so kind as to read it through. Perhaps you may pardon the opening sentence when you see that it is no commonplace, selfish declaration, but that it expresses a simple fact. Perhaps you may feel moved, because I ask for so little, by the submission of one who feels himself so much beneath you, by the influence that your decision will exercise upon my life. At my age, madame, I only know how to love, I am utterly ignorant of ways of attracting and winning a woman's love, but in my own heart I know raptures of adoration of her. I am irresistibly drawn to you by the great happiness that I feel through you; my thoughts turn to you with the selfish instinct which bids us draw nearer to the fire of life when we find it. I do not imagine that I am worthy of you; it seems impossible that I, young, ignorant, and shy, could bring you one-thousandth part of the happiness that I drink in at the sound of your voice and the sight of you. For me you are the only woman in the world. I cannot imagine life without you, so I have made up my mind to leave France, and to risk my life till I lose it in some desperate enterprise, in the Indies, in Africa, I care not where. How can I quell a love that knows no limits save by opposing to it something as infinite? Yet, if you will allow me to hope, not to be yours, but to win your friendship, I will stay. Let me come, not so very often, if you require it, to spend a few such hours with you as those stolen hours of yesterday: the keen delight of that brief happiness, to be cut short at the

least over-ardent word from me, will suffice to enable me to endure the boiling torrent in my veins. Have I presumed too much upon your generosity by this entreaty to suffer an intercourse in which all the gain is mine alone? You could find ways of showing the world, to which you sacrifice so much, that I am nothing to you; you are so clever and so proud! What have you to fear? If I could only lay bare my heart to you at this moment, to convince you that it is with no lurking afterthought that I make this humble request! Should I have told you that my love was boundless, while I prayed you to grant me friendship, if I had any hope of your sharing this feeling in the depths of my soul? No, while I am with you, I will be whatever you will, if only I may be with you. If you refuse (as you have the power to refuse), I will not utter one murmur, I will go. And if, at a later day, any other woman should enter into my life, you will have proof that you were right; but if I am faithful till death, you may feel some regret perhaps. The hope of causing you a regret will soothe my agony, and that thought shall be the sole revenge of a slighted heart. . . ."

Only those who have passed through all the exceeding tribulations of youth, who have seized on all the chimeras with two white pinions, the nightmare fancies at the disposal of a fervid imagination, can realize the horrors that seized upon Gaston de Nueil when he had reason to suppose that his ultimatum was in Mme. de Beauséant's hands. He saw the Vicomtesse, wholly untouched, laughing at his letter and his love, as those can laugh who have ceased to believe in love. He could have wished to have his letter back again. It was an absurd letter. There were a thousand and one things, now that he came to think of it, that he might have said, things infinitely better and more moving than those stilted phrases of his, those accursed, sophisticated, pretentious, fine-spun phrases, though, luckily, the punctuation had been pretty bad, and the lines shock-

ingly crooked. He tried not to think, not to feel; but he felt and thought, and was wretched. If he had been thirty years old, he might have got drunk, but the innocence of three-and-twenty knew nothing of the resources of opium nor of the expedients of advanced civilization. Nor had he at hand one of those good friends of the Parisian pattern who understand so well how to say *Pœte, non dolet!* by producing a bottle of champagne, or alleviate the agony of suspense by carrying you off somewhere to make a night of it. Capital fellows are they, always in low water when you are in funds, always off to some watering-place when you go to look them up, always with some bad bargain in horseflesh to sell you; it is true, that when you want to borrow of them they have always just lost their last louis at play; but in all other respects they are the best fellows on earth, always ready to embark with you on one of the steep down-grades where you lose your time, your soul, and your life!

At length M. de Nueil received a missive through the instrumentality of Jacques, a letter that bore the arms of Burgundy on the scented seal, a letter written on vellum notepaper.

He rushed away at once to lock himself in, and read and re-read *her* letter:

"You are punishing me very severely, monsieur, both for the friendliness of my effort to spare you a rebuff, and for the attraction which intellect always has for me. I put confidence in the generosity of youth, and you have disappointed me. And yet, if I did not speak unreservedly (which would have been perfectly ridiculous), at any rate I spoke frankly of my position, so that you might imagine that I was not to be touched by a young soul. My distress is the keener for my interest in you. I am naturally tenderhearted and kindly, but circumstances force me to act unkindly. Another woman would have flung your letter, unread, into the fire; I read it, and I am answering it.

My answer will make it clear to you that while I am not untouched by the expression of this feeling which I have inspired, albeit unconsciously, I am still far from sharing it, and the step which I am about to take will show you still more plainly that I mean what I say. I wish besides, to use, for your welfare, that authority, as it were, which you give me over your life; and I desire to exercise it this once to draw aside the veil from your eyes.

"I am nearly thirty years old, monsieur; you are barely two-and-twenty. You yourself cannot know what your thoughts will be at my age. The vows that you make so lightly to-day may seem a very heavy burden to you then. I am quite willing to believe that at this moment you would give me your whole life without a regret, you would even be ready to die for a little brief happiness; but at the age of thirty experience will take from you the very power of making daily sacrifices for my sake, and I myself should feel deeply humiliated if I accepted them. A day would come when everything, even Nature, would bid you leave me, and I have already told you that death is preferable to desertion. Misfortune has taught me to calculate; as you see, I am arguing perfectly dispassionately. You force me to tell you that I have no love for you; I ought not to love, I cannot, and I will not. It is too late to yield, as women yield, to a blind unreasoning impulse of the heart, too late to be the mistress whom you seek. My consolations spring from God, not from earth. Ah, and besides, with the melancholy insight of disappointed love, I read hearts too clearly to accept your proffered friendship. It is only instinct. I forgive the boyish ruse, for which you are not responsible as yet. In the name of this passing fancy of yours, for the sake of your career and my own peace of mind, I bid you stay in your own country; you must not spoil a fair and honorable life for an illusion which, by its very nature, cannot last. At a later day, when you have accomplished your real destiny, in the fully developed manhood that awaits you, you will appreciate this

answer of mine, though to-day it may be that you blame its hardness. You will turn with pleasure to an old woman whose friendship will certainly be sweet and precious to you then; a friendship untried by the extremes of passion and the disenchanting processes of life; a friendship which noble thoughts and thoughts of religion will keep pure and sacred. Farewell; do my bidding with the thought that your success will bring a gleam of pleasure into my solitude, and only think of me as we think of absent friends."

Gaston de Nueil read the letter, and wrote the following lines:

"MADAME—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own—"

When the man returned from his errand, M. de Nueil asked him with whom he left the note?

"I gave it to Mme. la Vicomtesse herself, sir; she was in her carriage and just about to start."

"For the town?"

"I don't think so, sir. Mme. la Vicomtesse had post-horses."

"Ah! then she is going away," said the Baron.

"Yes, sir," the man answered.

Gaston de Nueil at once prepared to follow Mme. de Beauséant. She led the way as far as Geneva, without a suspicion that he followed. And he? Amid the many thoughts that assailed him during that journey, one all-absorbing problem filled his mind—"Why did she go away?" Theories grew thickly on such ground for supposition, and naturally he inclined to the one that flattered his hopes—"If the Vicomtesse cares for me, a clever woman

would, of course, choose Switzerland, where nobody knows either of us, in preference to France, where she would find censorious critics."

An impassioned lover of a certain stamp would not feel attracted to a woman clever enough to choose her own ground; such women are too clever. However, there is nothing to prove that there was any truth in Gaston's supposition.

The Vicomtesse took a small house by the side of the lake. As soon as she was installed in it, Gaston came one summer evening in the twilight. Jacques, that flunkey in grain, showed no sign of surprise, and announced *M. le Baron de Nueil* like a discreet domestic well acquainted with good society. At the sound of the name, at the sight of its owner, Mme. de Beauséant let her book fall from her hands; her surprise gave him time to come close to her, and to say in tones that sounded like music in her ears:

"What joy it was to me to take the horses that brought you on this journey!"

To have the inmost desires of the heart so fulfilled! Where is the woman who could resist such happiness as this? An Italian woman, one of those divine creatures who, psychologically, are as far removed from the Parisian as if they lived at the Antipodes, a being who would be regarded as profoundly immoral on this side the Alps, an Italian (to resume) made the following comment on some French novels which she had been reading. "I cannot see," she remarked, "why these poor lovers take such a time over coming to an arrangement which ought to be the affair of a single morning." Why should not the novelist take a hint from this worthy lady, and refrain from exhausting the theme and the reader? Some few passages of coquetry it would certainly be pleasant to give in outline; the story of Mme. de Beauséant's demurs and sweet delayings, that, like the vestal virgins of antiquity, she might fall gracefully, and by lingering over the innocent raptures of first love draw from it its utmost strength and sweetness. M. de Nueil was at an age

when a man is the dupe of these caprices, of the fence which women delight to prolong; either to dictate their own terms, or to enjoy the sense of their power yet longer, knowing instinctively as they do that it must soon grow less. But, after all, these little boudoir protocols, less numerous than those of the Congress of London, are too small to be worth mention in the history of this passion.

For three years Mme. de Beauséant and M. de Nueil lived in the villa on the lake of Geneva. They lived quite alone, received no visitors, caused no talk, rose late, went out together upon the lake, knew, in short, the happiness of which we all of us dream. It was a simple little house, with green shutters, and broad balconies shaded with awnings, a house contrived of set purpose for lovers, with its white couches, soundless carpets, and fresh hangings, everything within it reflecting their joy. Every window looked out on some new view of the lake; in the far distance lay the mountains, fantastic visions of changing color and evanescent cloud; above them spread the sunny sky, before them stretched the broad sheet of water, never the same in its fitful changes. All their surroundings seemed to dream for them, all things smiled upon them.

Then weighty matters recalled M. de Nueil to France. His father and brother died, and he was obliged to leave Geneva. The lovers bought the house; and if they could have had their way, they would have removed the hills piecemeal, drawn off the lake with a siphon, and taken everything away with them.

Mme. de Beauséant followed M. de Nueil. She realized her property, and bought a considerable estate near Manerville, adjoining Gaston's lands, and here they lived together; Gaston very graciously giving up Manerville to his mother for the present in consideration of the bachelor freedom in which she left him.

Mme. de Beauséant's estate was close to a little town in one of the most picturesque spots in the valley of the Auge. Here the lovers raised barriers between themselves and social

intercourse, barriers which no creature could overleap, and here the happy days of Switzerland were lived over again. For nine whole years they knew happiness which it serves no purpose to describe; happiness which may be divined from the outcome of the story by those whose souls can comprehend poetry and prayer in their infinite manifestations.

All this time Mme. de Beauséant's husband, the present Marquis (his father and elder brother having died), enjoyed the soundest health. There is no better aid to life than a certain knowledge that our demise would confer a benefit on some fellow-creature. M. de Beauséant was one of those ironical and wayward beings who, like holders of life-annuities, wake with an additional sense of relish every morning to a consciousness of good health. For the rest, he was a man of the world, somewhat methodical and ceremonious, and a calculator of consequences, who could make a declaration of love as quietly as a lackey announces that "Madame is served."

This brief biographical notice of his lordship the Marquis de Beauséant is given to explain the reasons why it was impossible for the Marquise to marry M. de Nueil.

So, after a nine years' lease of happiness, the sweetest agreement to which a woman ever put her hand, M. de Nueil and Mme. de Beauséant were still in a position quite as natural and quite as false as at the beginning of their adventure. And yet they had reached a fatal crisis, which may be stated as clearly as any problem in mathematics.

Mme. la Comtesse de Nueil, Gaston's mother, a strait-laced and virtuous person, who had made the late Baron happy in strictly legal fashion, would never consent to meet Mme. de Beauséant. Mme. de Beauséant quite understood that the worthy dowager must of necessity be her enemy, and that she would try to draw Gaston from his unhallowed and immoral way of life. The Marquise de Beauséant would willingly have sold her property and gone back to Geneva, but she could not bring herself to do it; it would mean that she distrusted M. de Nueil. Moreover, he had taken a great

fancy to this very Valleroy estate, where he was making plantations and improvements. She would not deprive him of a piece of pleasurable routine-work, such as women always wish for their husbands, and even for their lovers.

A Mlle. de Rodière, twenty-two years of age, an heiress with a rent-roll of forty thousand livres, had come to live in the neighborhood. Gaston always met her at Manerville whenever he was obliged to go thither. These various personages being to each other as the terms of a proportion sum, the following letter will throw light on the appalling problem which Mme. de Beauséant had been trying for the past month to solve:

"My beloved angel, it seems like nonsense, does it not, to write to you when there is nothing to keep us apart, when a caress so often takes the place of words, and words too are caresses? Ah, well, no love. There are some things that a woman cannot say when she is face to face with the man she loves; at the bare thought of them her voice fails her, and the blood goes back to her heart; she has no strength, no intelligence left. It hurts me to feel like this when you are near me, and it happens often. I feel that my heart should be wholly sincere for you; that I should disguise no thought, however transient, in my heart; and I love the sweet carelessness, which suits me so well, too much to endure this embarrassment and constraint any longer. So I will tell you about my anguish—yes, it is anguish. Listen to me! do not begin with the little 'Tut, tut, tut,' that you use to silence me, an impertinence that I love, because anything from you pleases me. Dear soul from heaven, wedded to mine, let me first tell you that you have effaced all memory of the pain that once was crushing the life out of me. I did not know what love was before I knew you. Only the candor of your beautiful young life, only the purity of that great soul of yours, could satisfy the requirements of an exacting woman's heart. Dear love, how very often I have thrilled with joy to think that in these nine long, swift years,

my jealousy has not been once awakened. All the flowers of your soul have been mine, all your thoughts. There has not been the faintest cloud in our heaven; we have not known what sacrifice is; we have always acted on the impulses of our hearts. I have known happiness, infinite for a woman. Will the tears that drench this sheet tell you all my gratitude? I could wish that I had knelt to write the words!—Well, out of this felicity has arisen torture more terrible than the pain of desertion. Dear, there are very deep recesses in a woman's heart; how deep in my own heart I did not know myself until to-day, as I did not know the whole extent of love. The greatest misery which could overwhelm us is a light burden compared with the mere thought of harm for him whom we love. And how if we cause the harm, is it not enough to make one die? . . . This is the thought that is weighing upon me. But it brings in its train another thought that is heavier far, a thought that tarnishes the glory of love, and slays it, and turns it into a humiliation which sullies life as long as it lasts. You are thirty years old; I am forty. What dread this difference in age calls up in a woman who loves! It is possible that, first of all unconsciously, afterward in earnest, you have felt the sacrifices that you have made by renouncing all in the world for me. Perhaps you have thought of your future from the social point of view, of the marriage which would, of course, increase your fortune, and give you avowed happiness and children who would inherit your wealth; perhaps you have thought of reappearing in the world, and filling your place there honorably. And then, if so, you must have repressed those thoughts, and felt glad to sacrifice heiress and fortune and a fair future to me without my knowledge. In your young man's generosity, you must have resolved to be faithful to the vows which bind us each to each in the sight of God. My past pain has risen up before your mind, and the misery from which you rescued me has been my protection. To owe your love to your pity! The thought is even more painful to me than the fear of spoiling your life for you.

The man who can bring himself to stab his mistress is very charitable if he gives her her deathblow while she is happy and ignorant of evil, while illusions are in full blossom. . . . Yes, death is preferable to the two thoughts which have secretly saddened the hours for several days. To-day, when you asked 'What ails you?' so tenderly, the sound of your voice made me shiver. I thought that, after your wont, you were reading my very soul, and I waited for your confidence to come, thinking that my presentiments had come true, and that I had guessed at all that was going on in your mind. Then I began to think over certain little things that you always do for me, and I thought I could see in you the sort of affectation by which a man betrays a consciousness that his loyalty is becoming a burden. And in that moment I paid very dear for my happiness. I felt that Nature always demands the price for the treasure called love. Briefly, has not fate separated us? Can you have said, 'Sooner or later I must leave poor Claire; why not separate in time?' I read that thought in the depths of your eyes, and went away to cry by myself. Hiding my tears from you! the first tears that I have shed for sorrow for these ten years; I am too proud to let you see them, but I did not reproach you in the least.

"Yes, you are right. I ought not to be so selfish as to bind your long and brilliant career to my so-soon outworn life. . . . And yet—how if I have been mistaken? How if I have taken your love melancholy for a deliberation? Oh, my love, do not leave me in suspense; punish this jealous wife of yours, but give her back the sense of her love and yours; the whole woman lies in that—that consciousness sanctifies everything.

"Since your mother came, since you paid a visit to Mlle. de Rodière, I have been gnawed by doubts dishonoring to us both. Make me suffer for this, but do not deceive me; I want to know everything that your mother said and that you think! If you have hesitated between some alternative and me, I give you back your liberty. . . . I will not let you

know what happens to me; I will not shed tears for you to see; only—I will not see you again. . . . Ah! I cannot go on, my heart is breaking . . .

. . . . . .

I have been sitting benumbed and stupid for some moments. Dear love, I do not find that any feeling of pride rises against you; you are so kind-hearted, so open; you would find it impossible to hurt me or to deceive me; and you will tell me the truth, however cruel it may be. Do you wish me to encourage your confession? Well, then, heart of mine, I shall find comfort in a woman's thought. Has not the youth of your being been mine, your sensitive, wholly gracious, beautiful, and delicate youth? No woman shall find henceforth the Gaston whom I have known, nor the delicious happiness that he has given me. . . . No; you will never love again as you have loved, as you love me now; no, I shall never have a rival; it is impossible. There will be no bitterness in my memories of our love, and I shall think of nothing else. It is out of your power to enchant any woman henceforth by the childish provocations, the charming ways of a young heart, the soul's winning charm, the body's grace, the swift communion of rapture, the whole divine cortège of young love, in fine.

"Oh, you are a man now, you will obey your destiny, weighing and considering all things. You will have cares, and anxieties, and ambitions, and concerns that will rob *her* of the unchanging smile that made your lips fair for me: the tones that were always so sweet for me will be troubled at times; and your eyes that lighted up with radiance from heaven at the sight of me will often be lustreless for *her*. And besides, as it is impossible to love you as I love you, you will never care for that woman as you have cared for me. She will never keep a constant watch over herself as I have done; she will never study your happiness at every moment with an intuition which has never failed me. Ah, yes, the man, the heart and soul, which I shall have known will exist no longer. I shall bury him deep in my memory,

that I may have the joy of him still; I shall live happy in that fair past life of ours, a life hidden from all but our inmost selves.

"Dear treasure of mine, if all the while no least thought of liberty has risen in your mind, if my love is no burden on you, if my fears are chimerical, if I am still your Eve—the one woman in the world for you—come to me as soon as you have read this letter, come quickly! Ah, in one moment I will love you more than I have ever loved you, I think, in these nine years. After enduring the needless torture of these doubts of which I am accusing myself, every added day of love, yes, every single day, will be a whole lifetime of bliss. So speak, and speak openly; do not deceive me, it would be a crime. Tell me, do you wish for your liberty? Have you thought of all that a man's life means? Is there any regret in your mind? That *I* should cause you a regret! I should die of it. I have said it: I love you enough to set your happiness above mine, your life before my own. Leave on one side, if you can, the wealth of memories of our nine years' happiness, that they may not influence your decision, but speak! I submit myself to you as to God, the one Consoler who remains if you forsake me."

When Mme. de Beauséant knew that her letter was in M. de Nueil's hands, she sank in such utter prostration, the over-pressure of many thoughts so numbed her faculties, that she seemed almost drowsy. At any rate, she was suffering from a pain not always proportioned in its intensity to a woman's strength; pain which women alone know. And while the unhappy Marquise awaited her doom, M. de Nueil, reading her letter, felt that he was "in a very difficult position," to use the expression that young men apply to a crisis of this kind.

By this time he had all but yielded to his mother's importunities and to the attractions of Mlle. de la Rodière, a somewhat insignificant, pink-and-white young person, as

straight as a poplar. It is true that, in accordance with the rules laid down for marriageable young ladies, she scarcely opened her mouth, but her rent-roll of forty thousand livres spoke quite sufficiently for her. Mme. de Nueil, with a mother's sincere affection, tried to entangle her son in virtuous courses. She called his attention to the fact that it was a flattering distinction to be preferred by Mlle. de la Rodière, who had refused so many great matches; it was quite time, she urged, that he should think of his future, such a good opportunity might not repeat itself, some day he would have eighty thousand livres of income from land; money made anything bearable; if Mme. de Beauséant loved him for his own sake, she ought to be the first to urge him to marry. In short, the well-intentioned mother forgot no arguments which the feminine intellect can bring to bear upon the masculine mind, and by these means she had brought her son into a wavering condition.

Mme. de Beauséant's letter arrived just as Gaston's love of her was holding out against the temptations of a settled life conformable to received ideas. That letter decided the day. He made up his mind to break off with the Marquise and to marry.

"One must live a man's life," said he to himself.

Then followed some inkling of the pain that this decision would give to Mme. de Beauséant. The man's vanity and the lover's conscience further exaggerated this pain, and a sincere pity for her seized upon him. All at once the immensity of the misery became apparent to him, and he thought it necessary and charitable to deaden the deadly blow. He hoped to bring Mme. de Beauséant to a calm frame of mind by gradually reconciling her to the idea of separation; while Mlle. de la Rodière, always like a shadowy third between them, should be sacrificed to her at first, only to be imposed upon her later. His marriage should take place later, in obedience to Mme. de Beauséant's expressed wish. He went so far as to enlist the Marquise's

nobleness and pride and all the great qualities of her nature to help him to succeed in this compassionate design. He would write a letter at once to allay her suspicions. *A letter!* For a woman with the most exquisite feminine perception, as well as the intuition of passionate love, a letter in itself was a sentence of death.

So when Jacques came and brought Mme. de Beauséant a sheet of paper folded in a triangle, she trembled, poor woman, like a snared swallow. A mysterious sensation of physical cold spread from head to foot, wrapping her about in an icy winding sheet. If he did not rush to her feet, if he did not come to her in tears, and pale, and like a lover, she knew that all was lost. And yet, so many hopes are there in the heart of a woman who loves, that she is only slain by stab after stab, and loves on till the last drop of life-blood drains away.

"Does madame need anything?" Jacques asked gently, as he went away.

"No," she said.

"Poor fellow!" she thought, brushing a tear from her eyes, "he guesses my feelings, servant though he is!"

She read: "My beloved, you are inventing idle terrors for yourself. . . ." The Marquise gazed at the words, and a thick mist spread before her eyes. A voice in her heart cried, "He lies!"—Then she glanced down the page with the clairvoyant eagerness of passion, and read these words at the foot, "*Nothing has been decided as yet.* . . ." Turning to the other side with convulsive quickness, she saw the mind of the writer distinctly through the intricacies of the wording; this was no spontaneous outburst of love. She crushed it in her fingers, twisted it, tore it with her teeth, flung it in the fire, and cried aloud, "Ah! base that he is! I was his, and he had ceased to love me!"

She sank half dead upon the couch.

M. de Nueil went out as soon as he had written his letter. When he came back, Jacques met him on the

threshold with a note. "Madame la Marquise has left the château," said the man.

M. de Nueil, in amazement, broke the seal and read:

"MADAME—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own . . ."

It was his own letter, written to the Marquise as she set out for Geneva nine years before. At the foot of it Claire de Bourgogne had written, "Monsieur, you are free."

M. de Nueil went to his mother at Manerville. In less than three weeks he married Mlle. Stéphanie de la Rodière.

If this commonplace story of real life ended here, it would be to some extent a sort of mystification. The first man you meet can tell you a better. But the widespread fame of the catastrophe (for, unhappily, this is a true tale), and all the memories which it may arouse in those who have known the divine delights of infinite passion, and lost them by their own deed, or through the cruelty of fate—these things may perhaps shelter the story from criticism.

Mme. la Marquise de Beauséant never left Valleroy after her parting from M. de Nueil. After his marriage she still continued to live there, for some inscrutable woman's reason; any woman is at liberty to assign the one which most appeals to her. Claire de Bourgogne lived in such complete retirement that none of the servants, save Jacques and her own woman, ever saw their mistress. She required absolute silence all about her, and only left her room to go to the chapel on the Valleroy estate, whither a neighboring priest came to say mass every morning.

The Comte de Nueil sank a few days after his marriage into something like conjugal apathy, which might be interpreted to mean happiness or unhappiness equally easily.

"My son is perfectly happy," his mother said everywhere.

Mme. Gaston de Nueil, like a great many young women, was a rather colorless character, sweet and passive. A month after her marriage she had expectations of becoming a mother. All this was quite in accordance with ordinary views. M. de Nueil was very nice to her; but two months after his separation from the Marquise, he grew notably thoughtful and abstracted. But then he always had been serious, his mother said.

After seven months of this tepid happiness, a little thing occurred, one of those seemingly small matters which imply such great development of thought and such widespread trouble of soul, that only the bare fact can be recorded; the interpretation of it must be left to the fancy of each individual mind. One day, when M. de Nueil had been shooting over the lands of Manerville and Valleroy, he crossed Mme. de Beauséant's park on his way home, summoned Jacques, and when the man came, asked him, "Whether the Marquise was as fond of game as ever?"

Jacques, answering in the affirmative, Gaston offered him a good round sum (accompanied by plenty of specious reasoning) for a very little service. Would he set aside for the Marquise the game that the Count would bring? It seemed to Jacques to be a matter of no great importance whether the partridge on which his mistress dined had been shot by her keeper or by M. de Nueil, especially since the latter particularly wished that the Marquise should know nothing about it.

"It was killed on her land," said the Count, and for some days Jacques lent himself to the harmless deceit. Day after day M. de Nueil went shooting, and came back at dinner-time with an empty bag. A whole week went by in this way. Gaston grew bold enough to write a long letter to the Marquise, and had it conveyed to her. It was returned to him unopened. The Marquise's servant brought it back about nightfall. The Count, sitting in the drawing-room listening, while his wife at the piano mangled a "Ca-

price" of Hérold's, suddenly sprang up and rushed out to the Marquise, as if he were flying to an assignation. He dashed through a well-known gap into the park, and went slowly along the avenues, stopping now and again for a little to still the loud beating of his heart. Smothered sounds as he came nearer the château told him that the servants must be at supper, and he went straight to Mme. de Beauséant's room.

Mme. de Beauséant never left her bedroom. M. de Nueil could gain the doorway without making the slightest sound. There, by the light of two wax candles, he saw the thin, white Marquise in a great armchair; her head was bowed, her hands hung listlessly, her eyes gazing fixedly at some object which she did not seem to see. Her whole attitude spoke of hopeless pain. There was a vague something like hope in her bearing, but it was impossible to say whither Claire de Bourgogne was looking —forward to the tomb or backward into the past. Perhaps M. de Nueil's tears glittered in the deep shadows; perhaps his breathing sounded faintly; perhaps unconsciously he trembled, or again it may have been impossible that he should stand there, his presence unfelt by that quick sense which grows to be an instinct, the glory, the delight, the proof of perfect love. However it was, Mme. de Beauséant slowly turned her face toward the doorway, and beheld her lover of bygone days. Then Gaston de Nueil came forward a few paces.

"If you come any further, sir," exclaimed the Marquise, growing paler, "I shall fling myself out of the window!"

She sprang to the window, flung it open, and stood with one foot on the ledge, her hand upon the iron balustrade, her face turned toward Gaston.

"Go out! go out!" she cried, "or I will throw myself over."

At that dreadful cry the servants began to stir, and M. de Nueil fled like a criminal.

When he reached his home again he wrote a few lines and gave them to his own man, telling him to give the letter himself into Mme. de Beauséant's hands, and to say that it was a matter of life and death for his master. The messenger went. M. de Nueil went back to the drawing-room where his wife was still murdering the "Caprice," and sat down to wait till the answer came. An hour later, when the "Caprice" had come to an end, and the husband and wife sat in silence on opposite sides of the hearth, the man came back from Valleroy and gave his master his own letter, unopened.

M. de Nueil went into a small room beyond the drawing-room, where he had left his rifle, and shot himself.

The swift and fatal ending of the drama, contrary as it is to all the habits of young France, is only what might have been expected. Those who have closely observed, or known for themselves by delicious experience, all that is meant by the perfect union of two beings, will understand Gaston de Nueil's suicide perfectly well. A woman does not bend and form herself in a day to the caprices of passion. The pleasure of loving, like some rare flower, needs the most careful ingenuity of culture. Time alone, and two souls attuned each to each, can discover all its resources, and call into being all the tender and delicate delights for which we are steeped in a thousand superstitions, imagining them to be inherent in the heart that lavishes them upon us. It is this wonderful response of one nature to another, this religious belief, this certainty of finding peculiar or excessive happiness in the presence of one we love, that accounts in part for perdurable attachments and long-lived passion. If a woman possesses the genius of her sex, love never comes to be a matter of use and wont. She brings all her heart and brain to love, clothes her tenderness in forms so varied, there is such art in her most natural moments, or so much nature in her art, that in absence her memory is almost as potent as her presence. All other women are as shadows compared with her. Not until we have lost or known the dread of

losing a love so vast and glorious do we prize it at its just worth. And if a man who has once possessed this love shuts himself out from it by his own act and deed, and sinks to some loveless marriage; if by some incident, hidden in the obscurity of married life, the woman with whom he hoped to know the same felicity makes it clear that it will never be revived for him; if, with the sweetness of divine love still on his lips, he has dealt a deadly wound to *her*, his wife in truth, whom he forsook for a social chimera—then he must either die or take refuge in a materialistic, selfish, and heartless philosophy, from which impassioned souls shrink in horror.

As for Mme. de Beauséant, she doubtless did not imagine that her friend's despair could drive him to suicide, when he had drunk deep of love for nine years. Possibly she may have thought that she alone was to suffer. At any rate, she did quite rightly to refuse the most humiliating of all positions; a wife may stoop for weighty social reasons to a kind of compromise which a mistress is bound to hold in abhorrence, for in the purity of her passion lies all its justification.

ANGOULEME, *September, 1832.*

LA GRENADIÈRE

To D. W.

LA GRENADIÈRE is a little house on the right bank of the Loire as you go down stream, about a mile below the bridge of Tours. At this point the river, broad as a lake, and covered with scattered green islands, flows between two lines of cliff, where country houses built uniformly of white stone stand among their gardens and vineyards. The finest fruit in the world ripens there with a southern exposure. The patient toil of many generations has cut terraces in the cliff, so that the face of the rock reflects the rays of the sun, and the produce of hot climates may be grown out of doors in an artificially high temperature.

A church spire, rising out of one of the shallower dips in the line of cliff, marks the little village of Saint-Cyr, to which the scattered houses all belong. And yet a little further the Choisille flows into the Loire, through a fertile valley cut in the long low downs.

La Grenadière itself, half-way up the hillside, and about a hundred paces from the church, is one of those old-fashioned houses dating back some two or three hundred years, which you find in every picturesque spot in Touraine. A fissure in the rock affords convenient space for a flight of steps descending gradually to the "dike"—the local name for the embankment made at the foot of the cliffs to keep the Loire in its bed, and serve as a causeway for the highroad from Paris to Nantes. At the top of the steps a gate opens upon a narrow stony footpath between two terraces, for here the soil is banked up, and walls are built to prevent landslips. These earthworks, as it were, are crowned with trel-

lises and espaliers, so that the steep path that lies at the foot of the upper wall is almost hidden by the trees that grow on the top of the lower, upon which it lies. The view of the river widens out before you at every step as you climb to the house.

At the end you come to a second gateway, a Gothic archway covered with simple ornament, now crumbling into ruin and overgrown with wild-flowers—moss and ivy, wall-flowers and pellitory. Every stone wall on the hillside is decked with this ineradicable plant-life, which springs up along the cracks between the courses of masonry, tracing out the lines afresh with new wreaths for every time of year.

The worm-eaten gate gives into a little garden, a strip of turf, a few trees, and a wilderness of flowers and rosebushes —a garden won from the rock on the highest terrace of all, with the dark, old balustrade along its edge. Opposite the gateway, a wooden summer-house stands against the neighboring wall, the posts are covered with jessamine and honeysuckle, vines and clematis.

The house itself stands in the middle of this highest garden, above a vine-covered flight of steps, with an arched doorway beneath that leads to vast cellars hollowed out in the rock. All about the dwelling trellised vines and pomegranate-trees (the *grenadiers*, which give the name to the little close) are growing out in the open air. The front of the house consists of two large windows on either side of a very rustic-looking house door, and three dormer windows in the roof—a slate roof with two gables, prodigiously high-pitched in proportion to the low ground-floor. The house walls are washed with yellow color; and door, and first-floor shutters, and the Venetian shutters of the attic windows, all are painted green.

Entering the house, you find yourself in a little lobby with a crooked staircase straight in front of you. It is a crazy wooden structure, the spiral balusters are brown with age, and the steps themselves take a new angle at every turn. The great old-fashioned panelled dining-room, floored with

square white tiles from Chateau-Regnault, is on your right; to the left is the sitting-room, equally large, but here the walls are not panelled; they have been covered instead with a saffron-colored paper, bordered with green. The walnut-wood rafters are left visible, and the intervening spaces filled with a kind of white plaster.

The first story consists of two large whitewashed bedrooms with stone chimney-pieces, less elaborately carved than those in the rooms beneath. Every door and window is on the south side of the house, save a single door to the north, contrived behind the staircase to give access to the vineyard. Against the western wall stands a supplementary timber-framed structure, all the woodwork exposed to the weather being fledged with slates, so that the walls are checkered with bluish lines. This shed (for it is little more) is the kitchen of the establishment. You can pass from it into the house without going outside; but, nevertheless, it boasts an entrance door of its own, and a short flight of steps that brings you to a deep well, and a very rustical-looking pump, half hidden by water-plants and savin bushes and tall grasses. The kitchen is a modern addition, proving beyond doubt that La Grenadière was originally nothing but a simple *vendangeoir*—a vintage-house belonging to townsfolk in Tours, from which Saint-Cyr is separated by the vast river-bed of the Loire. The owners only came over for the day for a picnic, or at the vintage-time, sending provisions across in the morning, and scarcely ever spent the night there except during the grape harvest; but the English settled down on Touraine like a cloud of locusts, and La Grenadière must, of course, be completed if it was to find tenants. Luckily, however, this recent appendage is hidden from sight by the first two trees of a lime-tree avenue planted in a gully below the vineyards.

There are only two acres of vineyard at most, the ground rising at the back of the house so steeply that it is no very easy matter to scramble up among the vines. The slope, covered with green trailing shoots, ends within about five

feet of the house wall in a ditchlike passage always damp and cold and full of strong growing green things, fed by the drainage of the highly cultivated ground above, for rainy weather washes down the manure into the garden on the terrace.

A vinedresser's cottage also leans against the western gable, and is in some sort a continuation of the kitchen. Stone walls or espaliers surround the property, and all sorts of fruit trees are planted among the vines, in short, not an inch of this precious soil is wasted. If by chance man overlooks some dry cranny in the rocks, Nature puts in a fig-tree, or sows wild-flowers or strawberries in sheltered nooks among the stones.

Nowhere else in all the world will you find a human dwelling so humble and yet so imposing, so rich in fruit, and fragrant scents, and wide views of country. Here is a miniature Touraine in the heart of Touraine—all its flowers and fruits and all the characteristic beauty of the land are fully represented. Here are grapes of every district, figs and peaches and pears of every kind; melons are grown out of doors as easily as licorice plants, Spanish broom, Italian oleanders, and jessamines from the Azores. The Loire lies at your feet. You look down from the terrace upon the ever-changing river nearly two hundred feet below; and in the evening the breeze brings a fresh scent of the sea, with the fragrance of far-off flowers gathered upon its way. Some cloud wandering in space, changing its color and form at every moment as it crosses the pure blue of the sky, can alter every detail in the widespread wonderful landscape in a thousand ways, from every point of view. The eye embraces first of all the south bank of the Loire, stretching away as far as Amboise, then Tours with its suburbs and buildings, and the Plessis rising out of the fertile plain; further away, between Vouvray and Saint-Symphorien, you see a sort of crescent of gray cliff full of sunny vineyards; the only limits to your view are the low, rich hills along the Cher, a bluish line of horizon broken by many a chateau and

the wooded masses of many a park. Out to the west you lose yourself in the immense river, where vessels come and go, spreading their white sails to the winds which seldom fail them in the wide Loire basin. A prince might build a summer palace at La Grenadière, but certainly it will always be the home of a poet's desire, and the sweetest of retreats for two young lovers—for this vintage house, which belongs to a substantial burgess of Tours, has charms for every imagination, for the humblest and dullest as well as for the most impassioned and lofty. No one can dwell there without feeling that happiness is in the air, without a glimpse of all that is meant by a peaceful life without care or ambition. There is that in the air and the sound of the river that sets you dreaming; the sands have a language, and are joyous or dreary, golden or wan; and the owner of the vineyard may sit motionless amid perennial flowers and tempting fruit, and feel all the stir of the world about him.

If an Englishman takes the house for the summer, he is asked a thousand francs for six months, the produce of the vineyard not included. If the tenant wishes for the orchard fruit, the rent is doubled; for the vintage, it is doubled again. What can La Grenadière be worth, you wonder; La Grenadière, with its stone staircase, its beaten path and triple terrace, its two acres of vineyard, its flowering roses about the balustrades, its worn steps, well-head, rampant clematis, and cosmopolitan trees? It is idle to make a bid! La Grenadière will never be in the market; it was bought once and sold, but that was in 1690; and the owner parted with it for forty thousand francs, reluctant as any Arab of the desert to relinquish a favorite horse. Since then it has remained in the same family, its pride, its patrimonial jewel, its Regent diamond. "While you behold, you have and hold," says the bard. And from La Grenadière you behold three valleys of Touraine and the cathedral towers aloft in air like a bit of filigree work. How can one pay for such treasures? Could one ever pay for the health recovered there under the linden-trees?

In the spring of one of the brightest years of the Restoration, a lady with her housekeeper and her two children (the oldest a boy thirteen years old, the youngest apparently about eight) came to Tours to look for a house. She saw La Grenadière and took it. Perhaps the distance from the town was an inducement to live there.

She made a bedroom of the drawing-room, gave the children the two rooms above, and the housekeeper slept in a closet behind the kitchen. The dining-room was sitting-room and drawing-room all in one for the little family. The house was furnished very simply but tastefully; there was nothing superfluous in it, and no trace of luxury. The walnut-wood furniture chosen by the stranger lady was perfectly plain, and the whole charm of the house consisted in its neatness and harmony with its surroundings.

It was rather difficult, therefore, to say whether the strange lady (Mme. Willemsens, as she styled herself) belonged to the upper middle or higher classes, or to an equivocal, unclassified feminine species. Her plain dress gave rise to the most contradictory suppositions, but her manners might be held to confirm those favorable to her. She had not lived at Saint-Cyr, moreover, for very long before her reserve excited the curiosity of idle people, who always, and especially in the country, watch anybody or anything that promises to bring some interest into their narrow lives.

Mme. Willemsens was rather tall; she was thin and slender, but delicately shaped. She had pretty feet, more remarkable for the grace of the instep and ankle than for the more ordinary merit of slenderness; her gloved hands, too, were shapely. There were flitting patches of deep red in a pale face, which must have been fresh and softly colored once. Premature wrinkles had withered the delicately modelled forehead beneath the coronet of soft, well-set chestnut hair, invariably wound about her head in two plaits, a girlish coiffure which suited the melancholy face. There was a deceptive look of calm in the dark eyes, with the

hollow, shadowy circles about them; sometimes, when she was off her guard, their expression told of secret anguish. The oval of her face was somewhat long; but happiness and health had perhaps filled and perfected the outlines. A forced smile, full of quiet sadness, hovered continually on her pale lips; but when the children, who were always with her, looked up at their mother, or asked one of the incessant idle questions which convey so much to a mother's ears, then the smile brightened, and expressed the joys of a mother's love. Her gait was slow and dignified. Her dress never varied; evidently she had made up her mind to think no more of her toilet, and to forget a world by which she meant no doubt to be forgotten. She wore a long, black gown, confined at the waist by a watered-silk ribbon, and by way of scarf a lawn handkerchief with a broad hem, the two ends passed carelessly through her waistband. The instinct of dress showed itself in that she was daintily shod, and gray silk stockings carried out the suggestion of mourning in this unvarying costume. Lastly, she always wore a bonnet after the English fashion, always of the same shape and the same gray material, and a black veil. Her health apparently was extremely weak; she looked very ill. On fine evenings she would take her only walk, down to the bridge of Tours, bringing the two children with her to breathe the fresh, cool air along the Loire, and to watch the sunset effects on a landscape as wide as the Bay of Naples or the Lake of Geneva.

During the whole time of her stay at La Grenadière she went but twice into Tours; once to call on the headmaster of the school, to ask him to give her the names of the best masters of Latin, drawing, and mathematics; and a second time to make arrangements for the children's lessons. But her appearance on the bridge of an evening, once or twice a week, was quite enough to excite the interest of almost all the inhabitants of Tours, who make a regular promenade of the bridge. Still, in spite of a kind of spy system, by which no harm is meant, a provincial habit bred of want

of occupation and the restless inquisitiveness of the principal society, nothing was known for certain of the newcomer's rank, fortune, or real condition. Only, the owner of La Grenadière told one or two of his friends that the name under which the stranger had signed the lease (her real name, therefore, in all probability) was Augusta Willemsens, Countess of Brandon. This, of course, must be her husband's name. Events, which will be narrated in their place, confirmed this revelation; but it went no further than the little world of men of business known to the landlord.

So Mme. Willemsens was a continual mystery to people of condition. Hers was no ordinary nature; her manners were simple and delightfully natural, the tones of her voice were divinely sweet—this was all that she suffered others to discover. In her complete seclusion, her sadness, her beauty so passionately obscured, nay, almost blighted, there was so much to charm, that several young gentlemen fell in love; but the more sincere the lover, the more timid he became; and besides, the lady inspired awe, and it was a difficult matter to find enough courage to speak to her. Finally, if a few of the bolder sort wrote to her, their letters must have been burned unread. It was Mme. Willemsens' practice to throw all the letters which she received into the fire, as if she meant that the time spent in Touraine should be untroubled by any outside cares even of the slightest. She might have come to the enchanting retreat to give herself up wholly to the joy of living.

The three masters whose presence was allowed at La Grenadière spoke with something like admiring reverence of the touching picture that they saw there of the close, unclouded intimacy of the life led by this woman and the children.

The two little boys also aroused no small interest. Mothers could not see them without a feeling of envy. Both children were like Mme. Willemsens, who was, in fact, their mother. They had the transparent complexion

and bright color, the clear, liquid eyes, the long lashes, the fresh outlines, the dazzling characteristics of childish beauty.

The elder, Louis-Gaston, had dark hair and fearless eyes. Everything about him spoke as plainly of robust, physical health as his broad, high brow, with its gracious curves, spoke of energy of character. He was quick and alert in his movements, and strong of limb, without a trace of awkwardness. Nothing took him at unawares, and he seemed to think about everything that he saw.

Marie-Gaston, the other child, had hair that was almost golden, though a lock here and there had deepened to the mother's chestnut tint. Marie-Gaston was slender; he had the delicate features and the subtle grace so charming in Mme. Willemsens. He did not look strong. There was a gentle look in his gray eyes; his face was pale; there was something feminine about the child. He still wore his hair in long, wavy curls, and his mother would not have him give up embroidered collars, and little jackets fastened with frogs and spindle-shaped buttons; evidently she took a thoroughly feminine pleasure in the costume, a source of as much interest to the mother as to the child. The elder boy's plain white collar, turned down over a closely fitting jacket, made a contrast with his brother's clothing, but the color and material were the same; the two brothers were otherwise dressed alike, and looked alike.

No one could see them without feeling touched by the way in which Louis took care of Marie. There was an almost fatherly look in the older boy's eyes; and Marie, child though he was, seemed to be full of gratitude to Louis. They were like two buds, scarcely separated from the stem that bore them, swayed by the same breeze, lying in the same ray of sunlight; but the one was a brightly-colored flower, the other somewhat bleached and pale. At a glance, a word, an inflection in their mother's voice, they grew heedful, turned to look at her and listened, and did at once what they were bidden, or asked, or recommended to do. Mme.

Willemsens had so accustomed them to understand her wishes and desires, that the three seemed to have their thoughts in common. When they went for a walk, and the children, absorbed in their play, ran away to gather a flower or to look at some insect, she watched them with such deep tenderness in her eyes, that the most indifferent passer-by would feel moved, and stop and smile at the children, and give the mother a glance of friendly greeting. Who would not have admired the dainty neatness of their dress, their sweet, childish voices, the grace of their movements, the promise in their faces, the innate something that told of careful training from the cradle? They seemed as if they had never shed tears nor wailed like other children. Their mother knew, as it were, by electrically swift intuition, the desires and the pains which she anticipated and relieved. She seemed to dread a complaint from one of them more than the loss of her soul. Everything in her children did honor to their mother's training. Their threefold life, seemingly one life, called up vague, fond thoughts; it was like a vision of the dreamed-of bliss of a better world. And the three, so attuned to each other, lived in truth such a life as one might picture for them at first sight—the ordered, simple, and regular life best suited for a child's education.

Both children rose an hour after daybreak and repeated a short prayer, a habit learned in their babyhood. For seven years the sincere petition had been put up every morning on their mother's bed, and begun and ended by a kiss. Then the two brothers went through their morning toilet as scrupulously as any pretty woman; doubtless they had been trained in habits of minute attention to the person, so necessary to health of body and mind, habits in some sort conducive to a sense of wellbeing. Conscientiously they went through their duties, so afraid were they lest their mother should say when she kissed them at breakfast-time, "My darling children, where can you have been to have such black finger-nails already?" Then the two went out into the garden and shook off the dreams of the night in the morning

air and dew, until sweeping and dusting operations were completed, and they could learn their lessons in the sitting-room until their mother joined them. But although it was understood that they must not go to their mother's room before a certain hour, they peeped in at the door continually; and these morning inroads, made in defiance of the original compact, were delicious moments for all three. Marie sprang upon the bed to put his arms about his idolized mother, and Louis, kneeling by the pillow, took her hand in his. Then came inquiries, anxious as a lover's, followed by angelic laughter, passionate childish kisses, eloquent silences, lisping words, and the little ones' stories interrupted and resumed by a kiss, stories seldom finished, though the listener's interest never failed.

"Have you been industrious?" their mother would ask, but in tones so sweet and so kindly that she seemed ready to pity laziness as a misfortune, and to glance through tears at the child who was satisfied with himself.

She knew that the thought of pleasing her put energy into the children's work; and they knew that their mother lived for them, and that all her thoughts and her time were given to them. A wonderful instinct, neither selfishness nor reason, perhaps the first innocent beginnings of sentiment, teaches children to know whether or no they are the first and sole thought, to find out those who love to think of them and for them. If you really love children, the dear little ones, with open hearts and unerring sense of justice, are marvellously ready to respond to love. Their love knows passion and jealousy and the most gracious delicacy of feeling; they find the tenderest words of expression; they trust you—put an entire belief in you. Perhaps there are no undutiful children without undutiful mothers, for a child's affection is always in proportion to the affection that it receives—in early care, in the first words that it hears, in the response of the eyes to which a child first looks for love and life. All these things draw them closer to the mother or drive them apart. God lays the child under the

mother's heart, that she may learn that for a long time to come her heart must be its home. And yet—there are mothers cruelly slighted, mothers whose sublime, pathetic tenderness meets only a harsh return, a hideous ingratitude which shows how difficult it is to lay down hard-and-fast rules in matters of feeling.

Here, not one of all the thousand heart ties that bind child and mother had been broken. The three were alone in the world; they lived one life, a life of close sympathy. If Mme. Willemsens was silent in the morning, Louis and Marie would not speak, respecting everything in her, even those thoughts which they did not share. But the older boy, with a precocious power of thought, would not rest satisfied with his mother's assertion that she was perfectly well. He scanned her face with uneasy forebodings; the exact danger he did not know, but dimly he felt it threatening in those purple rings about her eyes, in the deepening hollows under them, and the feverish red that deepened in her face. If Marie's play began to tire her, his sensitive tact was quick to discover this, and he would call to his brother:

"Come, Marie! let us run in to breakfast, I am hungry!"

But when they reached the door, he would look back to catch the expression on his mother's face. She still could find a smile for him, nay, often there were tears in her eyes when some little thing revealed her child's exquisite feeling, a too early comprehension of sorrow.

Mme. Willemsens dressed during the children's early breakfast and game of play, she was coquettish for her darlings; she wished to be pleasing in their eyes; for them she would fain be in all things lovely, a gracious vision, with the charm of some sweet perfume of which one can never have enough.

She was always dressed in time to hear their lessons, which lasted from ten till three, with an interval at noon for lunch, the three taking the meal together in the summer-house. After lunch the children played for an hour,

while she—poor woman and happy mother—lay on a long sofa in the summer-house, so placed that she could look out over the soft, ever-changing country of Touraine, a land that you learn to see afresh in all the thousand chance effects produced by daylight and sky and the time of year.

The children scampered through the orchard, scrambled about the terraces, chased the lizards, scarcely less nimble than they; investigating flowers and seeds and insects, continually referring all questions to their mother, running to and fro between the garden and the summer-house. Children have no need of toys in the country, everything amuses them.

Mme. Willemsens sat at her embroidery during their lessons. She never spoke, nor did she look at masters or pupils; but she followed attentively all that was said, striving to gather the sense of the words to gain a general idea of Louis's progress. If Louis asked a question that puzzled his master, his mother's eyes suddenly lighted up, and she would smile and glance at him with hope in her eyes. Of Marie she asked little. Her desire was with her eldest son. Already she treated him, as it were, respectfully, using all a woman's, all a mother's tact to arouse the spirit of high endeavor in the boy, to teach him to think of himself as capable of great things. She did this with a secret purpose, which Louis was to understand in the future; nay, he understood it already.

Always, the lesson over, she went as far as the gate with the master, and asked strict account of Louis's progress. So kindly and so winning was her manner that his tutors told her the truth, pointing out where Louis was weak, so that she might help him in his lessons. Then came dinner, and play after dinner, then a walk, and lessons were learned till bedtime.

So their days went. It was a uniform but full life; work and amusements left them not a dull hour in the day. Discouragement and quarrelling were impossible. The mother's

boundless love made everything smooth. She taught her little sons moderation by refusing them nothing, and submission by making them see underlying Necessity in its many forms; she put heart into them with timely praise, developing and strengthening all that was best in their natures with the care of a good fairy. Tears sometimes rose to her burning eyes as she watched them play, and thought how that they had never caused her the slightest vexation. Happiness so far-reaching and complete brings such tears, because for us it represents the dim imaginings of Heaven which we all of us form in our minds.

Those were delicious hours spent on that sofa in the garden house, in looking out on sunny days over the wide stretches of river and the picturesque landscape, listening to the sound of her children's voices as they laughed at their own laughter, to the little quarrels that told most plainly of their union of heart, of Louis's paternal care of Marie, of the love that both of them felt for her. They spoke English and French equally well (they had had an English nurse since their babyhood), so their mother talked to them in both languages; directing the bent of their childish minds with admirable skill, admitting no fallacious reasoning, no bad principle. She ruled by kindness, concealing nothing, explaining everything. If Louis wished for books she was careful to give him interesting yet accurate books —books of biography, the lives of great seamen, great captains, and famous men, for little incidents in their history gave her numberless opportunities of explaining the world and life to her children. She would point out the ways in which men, really great in themselves, had risen from obscurity; how they had started from the lowest ranks of society, with no one to look to but themselves, and achieved noble destinies.

These readings, and they were not the least useful of Louis's lessons, took place while little Marie slept on his mother's knee in the quiet of the summer night, and the Loire reflected the sky; but when they ended, this ador-

able woman's sadness always seemed to be doubled; she would cease to speak, and sit motionless and pensive, and her eyes would fill with tears.

"Mother, why are you crying?" Louis asked one balmy June evening, just as the twilight of a soft-lit night succeeded to a hot day.

Deeply moved by his trouble, she put her arm about the child's neck and drew him to her.

"Because, my boy, the lot of Jameray Duval, the poor and friendless lad who succeeded at last, will be your lot, yours and your brother's, and I have brought it upon you. Before very long, dear child, you will be alone in the world, with no one to help or befriend you. While you are still children, I shall leave you, and yet, if only I could wait till you are big enough and know enough to be Marie's guardian! But I shall not live so long. I love you so much that it makes me very unhappy to think of it. Dear children, if only you do not curse me some day!—"

"But why should I curse you some day, mother?"

"Some day," she said, kissing him on the forehead, "you will find out that I have wronged you. I am going to leave you, here, without money, without"—here she hesitated—"without a father," she added, and at the word she burst into tears and put the boy from her gently. A sort of intuition told Louis that his mother wished to be alone, and he carried off Marie, now half awake. An hour later, when his brother was in bed, he stole down and out to the summer-house where his mother was stiting.

"Louis! come here."

The words were spoken in tones delicious to his heart. The boy sprang to his mother's arms, and the two held each other in an almost convulsive embrace.

"*Chérie*," he said at last, the name by which he often called her, finding that even loving words were too weak to express his feeling, "*chérie*, why are you afraid that you are going to die?"

"I am ill, my poor darling; every day I am losing

strength, and there is no cure for my illness; I know that."

"What is the matter with you?"

"Something that I ought to forget; something that you must never know.—You must not know what caused my death."

The boy was silent a while. He stole a glance now and again at his mother; and she, with her eyes raised to the sky, was watching the clouds. It was a sad, sweet moment. Louis could not believe that his mother would die soon, but instinctively he felt trouble which he could not guess. He respected her long musings. If he had been rather older, he would have read happy memories blended with thoughts of repentance, the whole story of a woman's life in that sublime face—the careless childhood, the loveless marriage, a terrible passion, flowers springing up in storm and struck down by the thunderbolt into an abyss from which there is no return.

"Darling mother," Louis said at last, "why do you hide your pain from me?"

"My boy, we ought to hide our troubles from strangers," she said; "we should show them a smiling face, never speak of ourselves to them, nor think about ourselves; and these rules, put in practice in family life, conduce to its happiness. You will have much to bear one day! Ah me! then think of your poor mother who died smiling before your eyes, hiding her sufferings from you, and you will take courage to endure the ills of life."

She choked back her tears, and tried to make the boy understand the mechanism of existence, the value of money, the standing and consideration that it gives, and its bearing on social position; the honorable means of gaining a livelihood, and the necessity of a training. Then she told him that one of the chief causes of her sadness and her tears was the thought that, on the morrow of her death, he and Marie would be left almost resourceless, with but a slender stock of money, and no friend but God.

"How quick I must be about learning!" cried Louis, giving her a piteous, searching look.

"Oh! how happy I am!" she said, showering kisses and tears on her son. "He understands me!—Louis," she went on, "you will be your brother's guardian, will you not? You promise me that? You are no longer a child!"

"Yes, I promise," he said; "but you are not going to die yet—say that you are not going to die!"

"Poor little ones!" she replied, "love for you keeps the life in me. And this country is so sunny, the air is so bracing, perhaps—"

"You make me love Touraine more than ever," said the child.

From that day, when Mme. Willemsens, foreseeing the approach of death, spoke to Louis of his future, he concentrated his attention on his work, grew more industrious, and less inclined to play than heretofore. When he had coaxed Marie to read a book and to give up boisterous games, there was less noise in the hollow pathways and gardens and terraced walks of La Grenadière. They adapted their lives to their mother's melancholy. Day by day her face was growing pale and wan, there were hollows now in her temples, the lines in her forehead grew deeper night after night.

August came. The little family had been five months at La Grenadière, and their whole life was changed. The old servant grew anxious and gloomy as she watched the almost imperceptible symptoms of slow decline in the mistress, who seemed to be kept in life by an impassioned soul and intense love of her children. Old Annette seemed to see that death was very near. That mistress, beautiful still, was more careful of her appearance than she had ever been; she was at pains to adorn her wasted self, and wore paint on her cheeks; but often while she walked on the upper terrace with the children, Annette's wrinkled face would peer out from between the savin trees by the pump. The old woman would forget her work, and stand

with the wet linen in her hands, scarce able to keep back her tears at the sight of Mme. Willemsens, so little like the enchanting woman she once had been.

The pretty house itself, once so gay and bright, looked melancholy; it was a very quiet house now, and the family seldom left it, for the walk to the bridge was too great an effort for Mme. Willemsens. Louis had almost identified himself, as it were, with his mother, and with his suddenly developed powers of imagination he saw the weariness and exhaustion under the red color, and constantly found reasons for taking some shorter walk.

So happy couples coming to Saint-Cyr, then the Petite Courtille of Tours, and knots of folk out for their evening walk along the "dike," saw a pale, thin figure dressed in black, a woman with a worn yet bright face, gliding like a shadow along the terraces. Great suffering cannot be concealed. The vinedresser's household had grown quiet also. Sometimes the laborer and his wife and children were gathered about the door of their cottage, while Annette was washing linen at the well-head, and Mme. Willemsens and the children sat in the summer-house, and there was not the faintest sound in those gardens gay with flowers. Unknown to Mme. Willemsens, all eyes grew pitiful at the sight of her, she was so good, so thoughtful, so dignified with those with whom she came in contact.

And as for her.—When the autumn days came on, days so sunny and bright in Touraine, bringing with them grapes and ripe fruits and healthful influences which must surely prolong life in spite of the ravages of mysterious disease—she saw no one but her children, taking the utmost that the hour could give her, as if each hour had been her last.

Louis had worked at night, unknown to his mother, and made immense progress between June and September. In algebra he had come as far as equations with two unknown quantities; he had studied descriptive geometry, and drew admirably well; in fact, he was prepared to pass the entrance examination of the École polytechnique.

Sometimes of an evening he went down to the bridge of Tours. There was a lieutenant there on half-pay, an Imperial naval officer, whose manly face, medal, and gait had made an impression on the boy's imagination, and the officer on his side had taken a liking to the lad, whose eyes sparkled with energy. Louis, hungering for tales of adventure, and eager for information, used to follow in the lieutenant's wake for the chance of a chat with him. It so happened that the sailor had a friend and comrade in the colonel of a regiment of infantry, struck off the rolls like himself; and young Louis-Gaston had a chance of learning what life was like in camp or on board a man-of-war. Of course, he plied the veterans with questions; and when he had made up his mind to the hardships of their rough callings, he asked his mother's leave to take country walks by way of amusement. Mme. Willemsens was beyond measure glad that he should ask; the boy's astonished masters had told her that he was overworking himself. So Louis went for long walks. He tried to inure himself to fatigue, climbed the tallest trees with incredible quickness, learned to swim, watched through the night. He was not like the same boy; he was a young man already, with a sunburned face, and a something in his expression that told of deep purpose.

When October came, Mme. Willemsens could only rise at noon. The sunshine, reflected by the surface of the Loire, and stored up by the rocks, raised the temperature of the air till it was almost as warm and soft as the atmosphere of the Bay of Naples, for which reason the faculty recommend the place of abode. At midday she came out to sit under the shade of green leaves with the two boys, who never wandered from her now. Lessons had come to an end. Mother and children wished to live the life of heart and heart together, with no disturbing element, no outside cares. No tears now, no joyous outcries. The elder boy, lying in the grass at his mother's side, basked in her eyes like a lover, and kissed her feet. Marie, the restless one, gathered flow-

ers for her, and brought them with a subdued look, standing on tiptoe to put a girlish kiss on her lips. And the pale woman, with the great tired eyes and languid movements, never uttered a word of complaint, and smiled upon her children, so full of life and health—it was a sublime picture, lacking no melancholy autumn pomp of yellow leaves and half-despoiled branches, nor the softened sunlight and pale clouds of the skies of Touraine.

At last the doctor forbade Mme. Willemsens to leave her room. Every day it was brightened by the flowers that she loved, and her children were always with her. One day, early in November, she sat at the piano for the last time. A picture—a Swiss landscape—hung above the instrument; and at the window she could see her children standing with their heads close together. Again and again she looked from the children to the landscape, and then again at the children. Her face flushed, her fingers flew with passionate feeling over the ivory keys. This was her last great day, an unmarked day of festival, held in her own soul by the spirit of her memories. When the doctor came, he ordered her to stay in bed. The alarming dictum was received with bewildered silence.

When the doctor had gone, she turned to the older boy.

"Louis," she said, "take me out on the terrace, so that I may see my country once more."

The boy gave his arm at those simply uttered words, and brought his mother out upon the terrace; but her eyes turned, perhaps unconsciously, to heaven rather than to the earth, and, indeed, it would have been hard to say whether heaven or earth was the fairer—for the clouds traced shadowy outlines, like the grandest Alpine glaciers, against the sky. Mme. Willemsens' brows contracted vehemently; there was a look of anguish and remorse in her eyes. She caught the children's hands, and clutched them to a heavily-throbbing heart.

" 'Parentage unknown!' " she cried, with a look that went to their hearts. "Poor angels, what will become of

you? And when you are twenty years old, what strict account may you not require of my life and your own?"

She put the children from her, and, leaning her arms upon the balustrade, stood for a while hiding her face, alone with herself, fearful of all eyes. When she recovered from the paroxysm, she saw Louis and Marie kneeling on either side of her, like two angels; they watched the expression of her face, and smiled lovingly at her.

"If only I could take that smile with me!" she said, drying her eyes.

Then she went into the house and took to the bed, which she would only leave for her coffin.

A week went by, one day exactly like another. Old Annette and Louis took it in turns to sit up with Mme. Willemsens, never taking their eyes from the invalid. It was the deeply tragical hour that comes in all our lives, the hour of listening in terror to every deep breath lest it should be the last, a dark hour protracted over many days. On the fifth day of that fatal week the doctor interdicted flowers in the room. The illusions of life were going one by one.

Then Marie and his brother felt their mother's lips hot as fire beneath their kisses; and at last, on the Saturday evening, Mme. Willemsens was too ill to bear the slightest sound, and her room was left in disorder. This neglect for a woman of refined taste, who clung so persistently to the graces of life, meant the beginning of the death-agony. After this, Louis refused to leave his mother. On Sunday night, in the midst of the deepest silence, when Louis thought that she had grown drowsy, he saw a white, moist hand move the curtain in the lamplight.

"My son!" she said. There was something so solemn in the dying woman's tones that the power of her wrought-up soul produced a violent reaction on the boy; he felt an intense heat pass through the marrow of his bones.

"What is it, mother?"

"Listen! To-morrow all will be over for me. We shall see each other no more. To-morrow you will be a man, my

child. So I am obliged to make some arrangements, which must remain a secret, known only to us. Take the key of my little table. That is it. Now open the drawer. You will find two sealed papers to the left. There is the name of LOUIS on one, and on the other MARIE."

"Here they are, mother."

"Those are your certificates of birth, darling; you will want them. Give them to our poor, old Annette to keep for you; ask her for them when you need them. Now," she continued, "is there not another paper as well, something in my handwriting?"

"Yes, mother," and Louis began to read, "*Marie Willemsens, born at—*"

"That is enough," she broke in quickly, "do not go on. When I am dead, give that paper, too, to Annette, and tell her to send it to the registrar at Saint-Cyr; it will be wanted if my certificate of death is to be made out in due form. Now find writing materials for a letter which I will dictate to you."

When she saw that he was ready to begin, and turned toward her for the words, they came from her quietly:

"Monsieur le Comte, your wife, Lady Brandon, died at Saint-Cyr, near Tours, in the department of Indre et-Loire. She forgave you."

"Sign yourself—" she stopped, hesitating and perturbed.

"Are you feeling worse?" asked Louis.

"Put 'Louis-Gaston,'" she said.

She sighed, then she went on.

"Seal the letter, and direct it. To Lord Brandon, Brandon Square, Hyde Park, London, Angleterre.—That is right. When I am dead, post the letter in Tours, and prepay the postage.—Now," she added, after a pause, "take the little pocket-book that you know, and come here, my dear child. . . . There are twelve thousand francs in it," she said, when Louis had returned to her side. "That is all

your own. Oh, me! you would have been better off if your father—"

"My father," cried the boy, "where is he?"

"He is dead," she said, laying her finger on her lips; "he died to save my honor and my life."

She looked upward. If any tears had been left to her, she could have wept for pain.

"Louis," she continued, "swear to me, as I lie here, that you will forget all that you have written, all that I have told you."

"Yes, mother."

"Kiss me, dear angel."

She was silent for a long while, she seemed to be drawing strength from God, and to be measuring her words by the life that remained in her.

"Listen," she began. "Those twelve thousand francs are all that you have in the world. You must keep the money upon you, because when I am dead the lawyers will come and seal everything up. Nothing will be yours then, not even your mother. All that remains for you to do will be to go out, poor orphan children, God knows where. I have made Annette's future secure. She will have an annuity of a hundred crowns, and she will stay at Tours no doubt. But what will you do for yourself and your brother?"

She raised herself, and looked at the brave child, standing by her bedside. There were drops of perspiration on his forehead, he was pale with emotion, and his eyes were dim with tears.

"I have thought it over, mother," he answered in a deep voice. "I will take Marie to the school here in Tours. I will give ten thousand francs to our old Annette, and ask her to take care of them, and to look after Marie. Then, with the remaining two thousand francs, I will go to Brest, and go to sea as an apprentice. While Marie is at school, I will rise to be a lieutenant on board a man-of-war. There, after all, die in peace, my mother; I shall come back again

a rich man, and our little one shall go to the Ecole Polytechnique, and I will find a career to suit his bent."

A gleam of joy shone in the dying woman's eyes. Two tears brimmed over, and fell over her fevered cheeks; then a deep sigh escaped between her lips. The sudden joy of finding the father's spirit in the son, who had grown all at once to be a man, almost killed her.

"Angel of heaven," she cried, weeping, "by one word you have effaced all my sorrows. Ah! I can bear them.—This is my son," she said, "I bore, I reared this man," and she raised her hands above her, and clasped them as if in ecstasy, then she lay back on the pillow.

"Mother, your face is growing pale!" cried the lad.

"Some one must go for a priest," she answered, with a dying voice.

Louis awakened Annette, and the terrified old woman hurried to the parsonage at Saint-Cyr.

When morning came, Mme. Willemsens received the Sacrament amid the most touching surroundings. Her children were kneeling in the room, with Annette and the vinedresser's family, simple folk, who had already become part of the household. The silver crucifix, carried by a chorister, a peasant child from the village, was lifted up, and the dying mother received the Viaticum from an aged priest. The Viaticum! sublime word, containing an idea yet more sublime, an idea only possessed by the apostolic religion of the Roman church.

"This woman has suffered greatly!" the old curé said in his simple way.

Marie Willemsens heard no voices now, but her eyes were still fixed upon her children. Those about her listened in terror to her breathing in the deep silence; already it came more slowly, though at intervals a deep sigh told them that she still lived, and of a struggle within her; then at last it ceased. Every one burst into tears except Marie. He, poor child, was still too young to know what death meant.

Annette and the vinedresser's wife closed the eyes of the

adorable woman, whose beauty shone out in all its radiance after death. Then the women took possession of the chamber of death, removed the furniture, wrapped the dead in her winding-sheet, and laid her upon the couch. They lighted tapers about her, and arranged everything—the crucifix, the sprigs of box, and the holy-water stoup—after the custom of the countryside, bolting the shutters and drawing the curtains. Later the curate came to pass the night in prayer with Louis, who refused to leave his mother. On Tuesday morning an old woman and two children and a vinedresser's wife followed the dead to her grave. These were the only mourners. Yet this was a woman whose wit and beauty and charm had won a European reputation, a woman whose funeral, if it had taken place in London, would have been recorded in pompous newspaper paragraphs, as a sort of aristocratic rite, if she had not committed the sweetest of crimes, a crime always expiated in this world, so that the pardoned spirit may enter heaven. Marie cried when they threw the earth on his mother's coffin; he understood that he should see her no more.

A simple, wooden cross, set up to mark her grave, bore this inscription, due to the curé of Saint-Cyr:

HERE LIES

AN UNHAPPY WOMAN,

WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-SIX.

KNOWN IN HEAVEN BY THE NAME OF AUGUSTA.

Pray for her!

When all was over, the children came back to La Grenadière to take a last look at their home; then, hand in hand, they turned to go with Annette, leaving the vinedresser in charge, with directions to hand over everything duly to the proper authorities.

At this moment, Annette called to Louis from the steps by the kitchen door, and took him aside with, "Here is madame's ring, Monsieur Louis."

The sight of this vivid remembrance of his dead mother moved him so deeply that he wept. In his fortitude, he had not even thought of this supreme piety; and he flung his arms round the old woman's neck. Then the three set out down the beaten path, and the stone staircase, and so to Tours, without turning their heads.

"Mamma used to come there!" Marie said when they reached the bridge.

Annette had a relative, a retired dressmaker, who lived in the Rue de la Guerche. She took the two children to this cousin's house, meaning that they should live together thenceforth. But Louis told her of his plans, gave Marie's certificate of birth and the ten thousand francs into her keeping, and the two went the next morning to take Marie to school.

Louis very briefly explained his position to the headmaster, and went. Marie came with him as far as the gateway. There Louis gave solemn parting words of the tenderest counsel, telling Marie that he would now be left alone in the world. He looked at his brother for a moment, and put his arms about him, took one more long look, brushed a tear from his eyes, and went, turning again and again till the very last to see his brother standing there in the gateway of the school.

A month later Louis-Gaston, now an apprentice on board a man-of-war, left the harbor of Rochefort. Leaning over the bulwarks of the corvette "Iris," he watched the coast of France receding swiftly till it became indistinguishable from the faint, blue horizon line. In a little while he felt that he was really alone, and lost in the wide ocean, lost and alone in the world and in life.

"There is no need to cry, lad; there is a God for us all," said an old sailor, with rough kindliness in his thick voice.

The boy thanked him with pride in his eyes. Then he bowed his head, and resigned himself to a sailor's life. He was a father.

ANGOULEME, *August, 1832.*

THE MESSAGE

To M. le Marquis Damaso Pareto

I HAVE ALWAYS longed to tell a simple and true story, which should strike terror into two young lovers, and drive them to take refuge each in the other's heart, as two children cling together at the sight of a snake by a woodside. At the risk of spoiling my story and of being taken for a coxcomb, I state my intention at the outset.

I myself played a part in this almost commonplace tragedy; so if it fails to interest you, the failure will be in part my own fault, in part owing to historical veracity. Plenty of things in real life are superlatively uninteresting; so that it is one-half of art to select from realities those which contain possibilities of poetry.

In 1819 I was travelling from Paris to Moulins. The state of my finances obliged me to take an outside place. Englishmen, as you know, regard those airy perches on the top of the coach as the best seats; and for the first few miles I discovered abundance of excellent reasons for justifying the opinion of our neighbors. A young fellow, apparently in somewhat better circumstances, who came to take the seat beside me from preference, listened to my reasoning with inoffensive smiles. An approximate nearness of age, a similarity in ways of thinking, a common love of fresh air, and of the rich landscape scenery through which the coach was lumbering along—these things, together with an indescribable magnetic something, drew us before long into one of those short-lived traveller's intimacies, in which we un-

bend with the more complacency because the intercourse is by its very nature transient, and makes no implicit demands upon the future.

We had not come thirty leagues before we were talking of women and of love. Then, with all the circumspection demanded in such matters, we proceeded naturally to the topic of our lady-loves. Young as we both were, we still admired "the woman of a certain age," that is to say, the woman between thirty-five and forty. Oh! any poet who should have listened to our talk, for Heaven knows how many stages beyond Montargis, would have reaped a harvest of flaming epithet, rapturous description, and very tender confidences. Our bashful fears, our silent interjections, our blushes, as we met each other's eyes, were expressive with an eloquence, a boyish charm, which I have ceased to feel. One must remain young, no doubt, to understand youth.

Well, we understood one another to admiration on all the essential points of passion. We had laid it down as an axiom at the very outset, that in theory and practice there was no such piece of drivelling nonsense in this world as a certificate of birth; that plenty of women were younger at forty than many a girl of twenty; and, to come to the point, that a woman is no older than she looks.

This theory set no limits to the age of love, so we struck out, in all good faith, into a boundless sea. At length, when we had portrayed our mistresses as young, charming, and devoted to us, women of rank, women of taste, intellectual and clever; when we had endowed them with little feet, a satin, nay, a delicately fragrant skin, then came the admission—on his part that Madame Such-a-one was thirty-eight years old, and on mine, that I worshipped a woman of forty. Whereupon, as if released on either side from some kind of vague fear, our confidences came thick and fast, when we found that we were of the same confraternity of love. It was which of us should overtop the other in sentiment.

One of us had travelled six hundred miles to see his mis-

tress for an hour. The other, at the risk of being shot for a wolf, had prowled about her park to meet her one night. Out came all our follies in fact. If it is pleasant to remember past dangers, is it not at least as pleasant to recall past delights? We live through the joy a second time. We told each other everything, our perils, our great joys, our little pleasures, and even the humors of the situation. My friend's countess had lighted a cigar for him; mine made chocolate for me, and wrote to me every day when we did not meet; his lady had come to spend three days with him at the risk of ruin to her reputation; mine had done even better, or worse, if you will have it so. Our countesses, moreover, were adored by their husbands; these gentlemen were enslaved by the charm possessed by every woman who loves; and, with even supererogatory simplicity, afforded us that just sufficient spice of danger which increases pleasure. Ah! how quickly the wind swept away our talk and our happy laughter!

When we reached Pouilly, I scanned my new friend with much interest, and, truly, it was not difficult to imagine him the hero of a very serious love affair. Picture to yourselves a young man of middle height, but very well proportioned, a bright, expressive face, dark hair, blue eyes, moist lips, and white and even teeth. A certain not unbecoming pallor still overspread his delicately cut features, and there were faint, dark circles about his eyes, as if he were recovering from an illness. Add, furthermore, that he had white and shapely hands, of which he was as careful as a pretty woman should be; add that he seemed to be very well informed, and was decidedly clever, and it should not be difficult for you to imagine that my travelling companion was more than worthy of a countess. Indeed, many a girl might have wished for such a husband, for he was a Vicomte with an income of twelve or fifteen thousand livres, "to say nothing of expectations."

About a league out of Pouilly the coach was overturned. My luckless comrade, thinking to save himself, jumped to

the edge of a newly plowed field, instead of following the fortunes of the vehicle and clinging tightly to the roof, as I did. He either miscalculated in some way, or he slipped; how it happenrd I do not know, but the coach fell over upon him, and he was crushed under it.

We carried him into a peasant's cottage, and there, amid the moans wrung from him by horrible sufferings, he contrived to give me a commission—a sacred task, in that it was laid upon me by a dying man's last wish. Poor boy, all through his agony he was torturing himself in his young simplicity of heart with the thought of the painful shock to his mistress when she should suddenly read of his death in a newspaper. He begged me to go myself to break the news to her. He bade me look for a key which he wore on a ribbon about his neck. I found it half buried in the flesh, but the dying boy did not utter a sound as I extricated it as gently as possible from the wound which it had made. He had scarcely given me the necessary directions—I was to go to his home at La Charité-sur-Loire for his mistress's love-letters, which he conjured me to return to her—when he grew speechless in the middle of a sentence; but from his last gesture, I understood that the fatal key would be my passport in his mother's house. It troubled him that he was powerless to utter a single word to thank me, for of my wish to serve him he had no doubt. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, then his eyelids drooped in token of farewell, and his head sank, and he died. His death was the only fatal accident caused by the overturn.

"But it was partly his own fault," the coachman said to me.

At La Charité, I executed the poor fellow's dying wishes. His mother was away from home, which in a manner was fortunate for me. Nevertheless, I had to assuage the grief of an old woman-servant, who staggered back at the tidings of her young master's death, and sank half-dead into a chair when she saw the blood-stained key. But I had another and more dreadful sorrow to think of, the sorrow of a woman

who had lost her last love; so I left the old woman to her prosopopeia, and carried off the precious correspondence, carefully sealed by my friend of a day.

The Countess's chateau was some eight leagues beyond Moulins, and then there was some distance to walk across country. So it was not exactly an easy matter to deliver my message. For diverse reasons into which I need not enter, I had barely sufficient money to take me to Moulins. However, my youthful enthusiasm determined to hasten thither on foot as fast as possible. Bad news travels swiftly, and I wished to be first at the chateau. I asked for the shortest way, and hurried through the field paths of the Bourbonnais, bearing, as it were, a dead man on my back. The nearer I came to the Chateau de Montpersan, the more aghast I felt at the idea of my strange self-imposed pilgrimage. Vast numbers of romantic fancies ran in my head. I imagined all kinds of situations in which I might find this Comtesse de Montpersan, or, to observe the laws of romance, this "Juliette," so passionately beloved of my travelling companion. I sketched out ingenious answers to the questions which she might be supposed to put to me. At every turn of a wood, in every beaten pathway, I rehearsed a modern version of the scene in which Sosie describes the battle to his lantern. To my shame be it said, I had thought at first of nothing but the part that *I* was to play, of my own cleverness, of how I should demean myself; but now that I was in the country, an ominous thought flashed through my soul like a thunderbolt tearing its way through a veil of gray cloud.

What an awful piece of news it was for a woman whose whole thoughts were full of her young lover, who was looking forward hour by hour to a joy which no words can express, a woman who had been at a world of pains to invent plausible pretexts to draw him to her side. Yet, after all, it was a cruel deed of charity to be the messenger of death! So I hurried on, splashing and bemiring myself in the by ways of the Bourbonnais.

Before very long I reached a great chestnut avenue with a pile of buildings at the further end—the Château of Montpersan stood out against the sky like a mass of brown cloud, with sharp, fantastic outlines. All the doors of the château stood open. This in itself disconcerted me, and routed all my plans; but I went in boldly, and in a moment found myself between a couple of dogs, barking as your true country-bred animal can bark. The sound brought out a hurrying servant-maid; who, when informed that I wished to speak to Mme. la Comtesse, waved a hand toward the masses of trees in the English park which wound about the château, with "Madame is out there—"

"Many thanks," said I ironically. I might have wandered for a couple of hours in the park with her "out there" to guide me.

In the meantime, a pretty little girl, with curling hair, dressed in a white frock, a rose-colored sash, and a broad frill at the throat, had overheard or guessed the question and its answer. She gave me a glance and vanished, calling in shrill, childish tones: "Mother! here is a gentleman who wishes to speak to you!"

And, along the winding alleys, I followed the skipping and dancing white frill, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp, that showed me the way among the trees.

I must make a full confession. I stopped behind the last shrub in the avenue, pulled up my collar, rubbed my shabby hat and my trousers with the cuffs of my sleeves, dusted my coat with the sleeves themselves, and gave them a final cleansing rub one against the other. I buttoned my coat carefully so as to exhibit the inner, always the least worn, side of the cloth, and finally had turned down the tops of my trousers over my boots, artistically cleaned in the grass. Thanks to this Gascon toilet, I could hope that the lady would not take me for the local rate collector; but now when my thoughts travel back to that episode of my youth, I sometimes laugh at my own expense.

Suddenly, just as I was composing myself, at a turning in the green walk, among a wilderness of flowers lighted up by a hot ray of sunlight, I saw Juliette—Juliette and her husband. The pretty little girl held her mother by the hand, and it was easy to see that the lady had quickened her pace somewhat at the child's ambiguous phrase. Taken aback by the sight of a total stranger, who bowed with a tolerably awkward air, she looked at me with a coolly courteous expression and an adorable pout, in which I, who knew her secret, could read the full extent of her disappointment. I sought, but sought in vain, to remember any of the elegant phrases so laboriously prepared.

This momentary hesitation gave the lady's husband time to come forward. Thoughts by the myriad flitted through my brain. To give myself a countenance, I got out a few sufficiently feeble inquiries, asking whether the persons present were really M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Montpersan. These imbecilities gave me time to form my own conclusions at a glance, and, with a perspicacity rare at that age, to analyze the husband and wife whose solitude was about to be so rudely disturbed.

The husband seemed to be a specimen of a certain type of nobleman, the fairest ornaments of the provinces of our day. He wore big shoes with stout soles to them. I put the shoes first advisedly, for they made an even deeper impression upon me than a seedy black coat, a pair of threadbare trousers, a flabby cravat, or a crumpled shirt collar. There was a touch of the magistrate in the man, a good deal more of the Councillor of the Prefecture, all the self-importance of the mayor of the arrondissement, the local autocrat, and the soured temper of the unsuccessful candidate who has never been returned since the year 1816. As to countenance—a wizened, wrinkled, sunburned face, and long, sleek locks of scanty gray hair; as to character—an incredible mixture of homely sense and sheer silliness; of a rich man's overbearing ways, and a total lack of man-

ners; just the kind of husband who is almost entirely led by his wife, yet imagines himself to be the master; apt to domineer in trifles, and to let more important things slip past unheeded—there you have the man!

But the Countess! Ah, how sharp and startling the contrast between husband and wife! The Countess was a little woman, with a flat, graceful figure and enchanting shape; so fragile, so dainty was she, that you would have feared to break some bone if you so much as touched her. She wore a white muslin dress, a rose-colored sash, and rose-colored ribbons in the pretty cap on her head; her chemisette was molded so deliciously by her shoulders and the loveliest rounded contours, that the sight of her awakened an irresistible desire of possession in the depths of the heart. Her eyes were bright and dark and expressive, her movements graceful, her foot charming. An experienced man of pleasure would not have given her more than thirty years, her forehead was so girlish. She had all the most transient delicate detail of youth in her face. In character she seemed to me to resemble the Comtesse de Lignolles and the Marquise de B——, two feminine types always fresh in the memory of any young man who has read Louvet's romance.

In a moment I saw how things stood, and took a diplomatic course that would have done credit to an old ambassador. For once, and perhaps for the only time in my life, I used tact, and knew in what the special skill of courtiers and men of the world consists.

I have had so many battles to fight since those heedless days, that they have left me no time to distil all the least actions of daily life, and to do everything so that it falls in with those rules of etiquette and good taste which wither the most generous emotions.

"M. le Comte," I said with an air of mystery, "I should like a few words with you," and I fell back a pace or two.

He followed my example. Juliette left us together, going away unconcernedly, like a wife who knew that she

can learn her husband's secrets as soon as she chooses to know them.

I told the Comte briefly of the death of my travelling companion. The effect produced by my news convinced me that his affection for his young collaborator was cordial enough, and this emboldened me to make reply as I did.

"My wife will be in despair," cried he; "I shall be obliged to break the news of this unhappy event with great caution."

"Monsieur," said I, "I addressed myself to you in the first instance, as in duty bound. I could not, without first informing you, deliver a message to Mme. la Comtesse, a message intrusted to me by an entire stranger; but this commission is a sort of sacred trust, a secret of which I have no power to dispose. From the high idea of your character which he gave me, I felt sure that you would not oppose me in the fulfilment of a dying request. Mme. la Comtesse will be at liberty to break the silence which is imposed upon me."

At this eulogy, the Count swung his head very amiably, responded with a tolerably involved compliment, and finally left me a free field. We returned to the house. The bell rang, and I was invited to dinner. As we came up to the house, a grave and silent couple, Juliette stole a glance at us. Not a little surprised to find her husband contriving some frivolous excuse for leaving us together, she stopped short, giving me a glance—such a glance as women only can give you. In that look of hers there was the pardonable curiosity of the mistress of the house confronted with a guest dropped down upon her from the skies, and innumerable doubts, certainly warranted by the state of my clothes, by my youth and my expression, all singularly at variance; there was all the disdain of the adored mistress, in whose eyes all men save one are as nothing; there were involuntary tremors and alarms; and, above all, the thought that it was tiresome to have an unexpected guest

just now, when, no doubt, she had been scheming to enjoy full solitude for her love. This mute eloquence I understood in her eyes, and all the pity and compassion in me made answer in a sad smile. I thought of her, as I had seen her for one moment, in the pride of her beauty; standing in the sunny afternoon in the narrow alley with the flowers on either hand; and as that fair wonderful picture rose before my eyes, I could not repress a sigh.

"Alas! madame, I have just made a very arduous journey—, undertaken solely on your account."

"Sir!"

"Oh! it is on behalf of one who calls you Juliette that I am come," I continued. Her face grew white.

"You will not see him to-day."

"Is he ill?" she asked, and her voice sank lower.

"Yes. But for pity's sake, control yourself. . . . He intrusted me with secrets that concern you, and you may be sure that never messenger could be more discreet nor more devoted than I."

"What is the matter with him?"

"How if he loved you no longer?"

"Oh! that is impossible!" she cried, and a faint smile, nothing less than frank, broke over her face. Then all at once a kind of shudder ran through her, and she reddened, and she gave me a wild, swift glance as she asked:

"Is he alive?"

Great God! What a terrible phrase! I was too young to bear that tone in her voice; I made no reply, only looked at the unhappy woman in helpless bewilderment.

"Monsieur, monsieur, give me an answer!" she cried.

"Yes, madame."

"Is it true? Oh! tell me the truth; I can bear the truth. Tell me the truth. Any pain would be less keen than this suspense."

I answered by two tears wrung from me by that strange tone of hers. She leaned against a tree with a faint, sharp cry.

"Madame, here comes your husband!"

"Have I a husband?" and with those words she fled away out of sight.

"Well," cried the Count, "dinner is growing cold.—Come, monsieur."

Thereupon I followed the master of the house into the dining-room. Dinner was served with all the luxury which we have learned to expect in Paris. There were five covers laid, three for the Count and Countess and their little daughter; my own, which should have been *his;* and another for the canon of Saint-Denis, who said grace, and then asked:

"Why, where can our dear Countess be?"

"Oh! she will be here directly," said the Count. He had hastily helped us to the soup, and was despatching an ample plateful with portentous speed.

"Oh! nephew," exclaimed the canon, "if your wife was here, you would behave more rationally."

"Papa will make himself ill!" said the child with a mischievous look.

Just after this extraordinary gastronomical episode, as the Count was eagerly helping himself to a slice of venison, a housemaid came in with, "We cannot find madame anywhere, sir!"

I sprang up at the words with a dread in my mind, my fears written so plainly in my face that the old canon came out after me into the garden. The Count, for the sake of appearances, came as far as the threshold.

"Don't go, don't go!" called he. "Don't trouble yourselves in the least," but he did not offer to accompany us.

We three—the canon, the housemaid, and I—hurried through the garden walks and over the bowling-green in the park, shouting, listening for an answer, growing more uneasy every moment. As we hurried along, I told the story of the fatal accident, and discovered how strongly the maid was attached to her mistress, for she took my secret dread far more seriously than the canon. We went along by the pools of water; all over the park we went; but we neither found the Countess nor any sign that she

had passed that way. At last we turned back, and under the walls of some outbuildings I heard a smothered, wailing cry, so stifled that it was scarcely audible. The sound seemed to come from a place that might have been a granary. I went in at all risks, and there we found Juliette. With the instinct of despair, she had buried herself deep in the hay, hiding her face in it to deaden those dreadful cries—pudency even stronger than grief. She was sobbing and crying like a child, but there was a more poignant, more piteous sound in the sobs. There was nothing left in the world for her. The maid pulled the hay from her, her mistress submitting with the supine listlessness of a dying animal. The maid could find nothing to say but "There! madame; there, there—"

"What is the matter with her? What is it, niece?" the old canon kept on exclaiming.

At last, with the girl's help, I carried Juliette to her room, gave orders that she was not to be disturbed, and that every one must be told that the Countess was suffering from a sick headache. Then we came down to the dining-room, the canon and I.

Some little time had passed since we left the dinner-table; I had scarcely given a thought to the Count since we left him under the peristyle; his indifference had surprised me, but my amazement increased when we came back and found him seated philosophically at table. He had eaten pretty nearly all the dinner, to the huge delight of his little daughter; the child was smiling at her father's flagrant infraction of the Countess's rules. The man's odd indifference was explained to me by a mild altercation which at once arose with the canon. The Count was suffering from some serious complaint. I cannot remember now what it was, but his medical advisers had put him on a very severe regimen, and the ferocious hunger familiar to convalescents, sheer animal appetite, had overpowered all human sensibilities. In that little space I had seen frank and undisguised human nature under two very different aspects, in such a sort that there

was a certain grotesque element in the very midst of a most terrible tragedy.

The evening that followed was dreary. I was tired. The canon racked his brains to discover a reason for his niece's tears. The lady's husband silently digested his dinner; content, apparently, with the Countess's rather vague explanation, sent through the maid, putting forward some feminine ailment as her excuse. We all went early to bed.

As I passed the door of the Countess's room on the way to my night's lodging, I asked the servant timidly for news of her. She heard my voice, and would have me come in, and tried to talk, but in vain—she could not utter a sound. She bent her head, and I withdrew. In spite of the painful agitation, which I had felt to the full as youth can feel, I fell asleep, tired out with my forced march.

It was late in the night when I was awakened by the grating sound of curtain rings drawn sharply over the metal rods. There sat the Countess at the foot of my bed. The light from a lamp set on my table fell full upon her face.

"Is it really true, monsieur, quite true?" she asked. "I do not know how I can live after that awful blow which struck me down a little while since; but just now I feel calm. I want to know everything."

"What calm!" I said to myself as I saw the ghastly pallor of her face contrasting with her brown hair, and heard the guttural tones of her voice. The havoc wrought in her drawn features filled me with dumb amazement.

Those few hours had bleached her; she had lost a woman's last glow of autumn color. Her eyes were red and swollen, nothing of their beauty remained, nothing looked out of them save her bitter and exceeding grief; it was as if a gray cloud covered the place through which the sun had shone.

I gave her the story of the accident in a few words, without laying too much stress on some too harrowing details. I told her about our first day's journey, and how it had been filled with recollections of her and of love. And she

listened eagerly, without shedding a tear, leaning her face toward me, as some zealous doctor might lean to watch any change in a patient's face. When she seemed to me to have opened her whole heart to pain, to be deliberately plunging herself into misery with the first delirious frenzy of despair, I caught at my opportunity, and told her of the fears that troubled the poor dying man, told her how and why it was that he had given me this fatal message. Then her tears were dried by the fires that burned in the dark depths within her. She grew even paler. When I drew the letters from beneath my pillow and held them out to her, she took them mechanically; then, trembling from head to foot, she said in a hollow voice:

"And *I* burned all his letters!—I have nothing of him left!—Nothing! nothing!"

She struck her hand against her forehead.

"Madame—" I began.

She glanced at me in the convulsion of grief.

"I cut this from his head, this lock of his hair."

And I gave her that last imperishable token that had been a very part of him she loved. Ah! if you had felt as I felt then, her burning tears falling on your hands, you would know what gratitude is, when it follows so closely upon the benefit. Her eyes shone with a feverish glitter, a faint ray of happiness gleamed out of her terrible suffering, as she grasped my hands in hers, and said, in a choking voice:

"Ah! you love! May you be happy always. May you never lose her whom you love."

She broke off, and fled away with her treasure.

Next morning, this night-scene among my dreams seemed like a dream; to make sure of the piteous truth, I was obliged to look fruitlessly under my pillow for the packet of letters. There is no need to tell you how the next day went. I spent several hours of it with the Juliette whom my poor comrade had so praised to me. In her lightest words, her gestures, in all that she did and said, I saw proofs of the nobleness of

soul, the delicacy of feeling which made her what she was, one of those beloved, loving, and self sacrificing natures so rarely found upon this earth.

In the evening the Comte de Montpersan came himself as far as Moulins with me. There he spoke with a kind of embarrassment:

"Monsieur, if it is not abusing your good-nature, and acting very inconsiderately toward a stranger to whom we are already under obligations, would you have the goodness, as you are going to Paris, to remit a sum of money to M. de— (I forget the name), in the Rue du Sentier; I owe him an amount, and he asked me to send it as soon as possible."

"Willingly," said I. And in the innocence of my heart, I took charge of a rouleau of twenty-five louis d'or, which paid the expenses of my journey back to Paris; and only when, on my arrival, I went to the address indicated to repay the amount to M. de Montpersan's correspondent, did I understand the ingenious delicacy with which Julie had obliged me. Was not all the genius of a loving woman revealed in such a way of lending, in her reticence with regard to a poverty easily guessed?

And what rapture to have this adventure to tell to a woman who clung to you more closely in dread, saying, "Oh, my dear, not you! *you* must not die!"

PARIS, *January, 1832.*

GOBSECK

TO M. LE BARON BARCHOU DE PENHOEN

Among all the pupils of the Oratorian school at Vendôme, we are, I think, the only two who have afterward met in mid-career of a life of letters—we who once were cultivating Philosophy when by rights we should have been minding our De viris. *When we met, you were engaged upon your noble works on German philosophy, and I upon this Study. So neither of us has missed his vocation; and you, when you see your name here, will feel, no doubt, as much pleasure as he who inscribes his work to you.—Your old schoolfellow,* — *De Balzac.*

1840.

IT WAS ONE O'CLOCK in the morning, during the winter of 1829–30, but in the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's salon two persons stayed on who did not belong to her family circle. A young and good-looking man heard the clock strike, and took his leave. When the courtyard echoed with the sound of a departing carriage, the Vicomtesse looked up, saw that no one was present save her brother and a friend of the family finishing their game of piquet, and went across to her daughter. The girl, standing by the chimney-piece, apparently examining a transparent fire-screen, was listening to the sounds from the courtyard in a way that justified certain maternal fears.

"Camille," said the Vicomtesse, "if you continue to behave to young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to see no more of him here. Listen, child, and if you have any confidence in my love,

let me guide you in life. At seventeen one cannot judge of past or future, nor of certain social considerations. I have only one thing to say to you. M. de Restaud has a mother, a mother who would waste millions of francs; a woman of no birth, a Mlle. Goriot; people talked a good deal about her at one time. She behaved so badly to her own father that she certainly does not deserve to have so good a son: the young Count adores her, and maintains her in her position with dutifulness worthy of all praise, and he is extremely good to his brother and sister.—But however admirable *his* behavior may be," the Vicomtesse added with a shrewd expression, "so long as his mother lives, any family would take alarm at the idea of intrusting a daughter's fortune and future to young Restaud."

"I overheard a word now and again in your talk with Mlle. de Grandlieu," cried the friend of the family, "and it made me anxious to put in a word of my own.—I have won, M. le Comte," he added, turning to his opponent. "I shall throw you over and go to your niece's assistance."

"See what it is to have an attorney's ears!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse. "My dear Derville, how could you know what I was saying to Camille in a whisper?"

"I knew it from your looks," answered Derville, seating himself in a low chair by the fire.

Camille's uncle went to her side, and Mme. de Grandlieu took up her position on a hearth stool between her daughter and Derville.

"The time has come for telling a story, which should modify your judgment as to Ernest de Restaud's prospects."

"A story?" cried Camille. "Do begin at once, monsieur."

The glance that Derville gave the Vicomtesse told her that this tale was meant for her. The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, be it said, was one of the greatest ladies in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, by reason of her fortune and her ancient name; and though it may seem improbable that a Paris attorney should speak so familiarly to her, or be so

much at home in her house, the fact is nevertheless easily explained.

When Mme. de Grandlieu returned to France with the Royal family, she came to Paris, and at first lived entirely on the pension allowed her out of the Civil List by Louis XVIII.—an intolerable position. The Hotel de Grandlieu had been sold by the Republic. It came to Derville's knowledge that there were flaws in the title, and he thought that it ought to return to the Vicomtesse. He instituted proceedings for nullity of contract, and gained the day. Encouraged by this success, he used legal quibbles to such purpose that he compelled some institution or other to disgorge the Forest of Liceney. Then he won certain lawsuits against the Canal d'Orléans, and recovered a tolerably large amount of property, with which the Emperor had endowed various public institutions. So it fell out that, thanks to the young attorney's skilful management, Mme. de Grandlieu's income reached the sum of some sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of the vast sums returned to her by the law of indemnity. And Derville, a man of high character, well informed, modest, and pleasant in company, became the house-friend of the family.

By his conduct of Mme. de Grandlieu's affairs he had fairly earned the esteem of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and numbered the best families among his clients; but he did not take advantage of his popularity, as an ambitious man might have done. The Vicomtesse would have had him sell his practice and enter the magistracy, in which career advancement would have been swift and certain with such influence at his disposal; but he persistently refused all offers. He only went into society to keep up his connections, but he occasionally spent an evening at the Hotel de Grandlieu. It was a very lucky thing for him that his talents had been brought into the light by his devotion to Mme. de Grandlieu, for his practice otherwise might have gone to pieces. Derville had not an attorney's soul. Since Ernest de Restaud had appeared at the Hotel de Grandlieu,

and he had noticed that Camille felt attracted to the young man, Derville had been as assiduous in his visits as any dandy of the Chaussée-d'Antin newly admitted to the noble Faubourg. At a ball only a few days before, when he happened to stand near Camille, and said, indicating the Count:

"It is a pity that yonder youngster has not two or three million francs, is it not?"

"Is it a pity? I do not think so," the girl answered. "M. de Restaud has plenty of ability; he is well educated, and the Minister, his chief, thinks well of him. He will be a remarkable man, I have no doubt. 'Yonder youngster' will have as much money as he wishes when he comes into power."

"Yes, but suppose that he were rich already?"

"Rich already?" repeated Camille, flushing red. "Why, all the girls in the room would be quarrelling for him," she added, glancing at the quadrilles.

"And then," retorted the attorney, "Mlle. de Grandlieu might not be the one toward whom his eyes are always turned? That is what that red color means! You like him, do you not? Come, speak out."

Camille suddenly rose to go.

"She loves him," Derville thought.

Since that evening, Camille had been unwontedly attentive to the attorney, who approved of her liking for Ernest de Restaud. Hitherto, although she knew well that her family lay under great obligations to Derville, she had felt respect rather than real friendship for him, their relation was more a matter of politeness than of warmth of feeling; and by her manner, and by the tones of her voice, she had always made him sensible of the distance which socially lay between them. Gratitude is a charge upon the inheritance which the second generation is apt to repudiate.

"This adventure," Derville began after a pause, "brings the one romantic event in my life to my mind. You are

laughing already," he went on; "it seems so ridiculous, doesn't it, that an attorney should speak of a romance in his life? But once I was five-and-twenty, like everybody else, and even then I had seen some queer things. I ought to begin at the beginning by telling you about some one whom it is impossible that you should have known. The man in question was a usurer.

"Can you grasp a clear notion of that sallow, wan face of his? I wish the Académie would give me leave to dub such faces the *lunar* type. It was like silver-gilt, with the gilt rubbed off. His hair was iron-gray, sleek, and carefully combed; his features might have been cast in bronze; Talleyrand himself was not more impassive than this money-lender. A pair of little eyes, yellow as a ferret's, and with scarce an eyelash to them, peered out from under the sheltering peak of a shabby old cap, as if they feared the light. He had the thin lips that you see in Rembrandt's or Metsu's portraits of alchemists and shrunken old men, and a nose so sharp at the tip that it put you in mind of a gimlet. His voice was low; he always spoke suavely; he never flew into a passion. His age was a problem; it was hard to say whether he had grown old before his time, or whether by economy of youth he had saved enough to last him his life.

"His room, and everything in it, from the green baize of his bureau to the strip of carpet by the bed, was as clean and threadbare as the chilly sanctuary of some elderly spinster who spends her days in rubbing her furniture. In winter time, the live brands of the fire smouldered all day in a bank of ashes; there was never any flame in his grate. He went through his day, from his uprising to his evening coughing-fit, with the regularity of a pendulum, and in some sort was a clockwork man, wound up by a night's slumber. Touch a wood-louse on an excursion across your sheet of paper, and the creature shams death; and in something the same way my acquaintance would stop short in the middle of a sentence, while a cart went by, to save the strain to his voice. Following the example of Fontenelle, he was thrifty of pulse-

strokes, and concentrated all human sensibility in the innermost sanctuary of Self. His life flowed soundless as the sands of an hour-glass. His victims sometimes flew into a rage and made a great deal of noise, followed by a great silence; so is it in a kitchen after a fowl's neck has been wrung.

"Toward evening this bill of exchange incarnate would assume ordinary human shape, and his metals were metamorphosed into a human heart. When he was satisfied with his day's business, he would rub his hands; his inward glee would escape like smoke through every rift and wrinkle of his face;—in no other way is it possible to give an idea of the mute play of muscle which expressed sensations similar to the soundless laughter of 'Leather Stocking.' Indeed, even in transports of joy, his conversation was confined to monosyllables; he wore the same non-committal countenance.

"This was the neighbor Chance found for me in the house in the Rue des Grès, where I used to live when as yet I was only a second clerk finishing my third year's studies. The house is damp and dark, and boasts no courtyard. All the windows look on the street; the whole dwelling, in claustral fashion, is divided into rooms or cells of equal size, all opening upon a long corridor dimly lighted with borrowed lights. The place must have been part of an old convent once. So gloomy was it that the gayety of eldest sons forsook them on the stairs before they reached my neighbor's door. He and his house were much alike; even so does the oyster resemble his native rock.

"I was the one creature with whom he had any communication, socially speaking; he would come in to ask for a light, to borrow a book or a newspaper, and of an evening he would allow me to go into his cell, and when he was in the humor we would chat together. These marks of confidence were the results of four years of neighborhood and my own sober conduct. From sheer lack of pence, I was bound to live pretty much as he did. Had he any relations or friends? Was he rich or poor? Nobody could give an

answer to these questions. I myself never saw money in his room. Doubtless his capital was safely stowed in the strong-rooms of the Bank. He used to collect his bills himself as they fell due, running all over Paris on a pair of shanks as skinny as a stag's. On occasion he could be a martyr to prudence. One day, when he happened to have gold in his pockets, a double napoleon worked its way, somehow or other, out of his fob and fell, and another lodger following him up the stairs picked up the coin and returned it to its owner.

"'That isn't mine!' said he, with a start of surprise. 'Mine indeed! If I were rich, should I live as I do!'

"He made his cup of coffee himself every morning on the cast-iron chafing dish which stood all day in the black angle of the grate; his dinner came in from a cookshop; and our old porter's wife went up at the prescribed hour to set his room in order. Finally, a whimsical chance, in which Sterne would have seen predestination, had named the man Gobseck. When I did business for him later, I came to know that he was about seventy-six years old at the time when we became acquainted. He was born about 1740, in some outlying suburb of Antwerp, of a Dutch father and a Jewish mother, and his name was Jean-Esther Van Gobseck. You remember how all Paris took an interest in that murder case, a woman named La belle Hollandaise? I happened to mention it to my old neighbor, and he answered without the slightest symptom of interest or surprise, 'She is my grand-niece.'

"That was the only remark drawn from him by the death of his sole surviving next of kin, his sister's granddaughter. From reports of the case I found that La belle Hollandaise was in fact named Sara Van Gobseck. When I asked by what curious chance his grandniece came to bear his surname, he smiled: 'The women never marry in our family.'

"Singular creature, he had never cared to find out a single relative among four generations counted on the female side. The thought of his heirs was abhorrent to him; and the idea

that his wealth could pass into other hands after his death simply inconceivable.

"He was a child, ten years old, when his mother shipped him off as cabin boy on a voyage to the Dutch Straits Settlements, and there he knocked about for twenty years. The inscrutable lines on that sallow forehead kept the secret of horrible adventures, sudden panic, unhoped-for luck, romantic cross events, joys that knew no limit, hunger endured and love trampled underfoot, fortunes risked, lost, and recovered, life endangered time and time again, and saved, it may be, by one of the rapid, ruthless decisions absolved by necessity. He had known Admiral Simeuse, M. de Lally, M. de Kergarouët, M. d'Estaing, *le Bailli de Suffren*, M. de Portenduère, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, Tippoo Sahib's father, Tippoo Sahib himself. The bully who served Mahadaji Sindhia, King of Delhi, and did so much to found the power of the Mahrattas, had had dealings with Gobseck. Long residence at St. Thomas brought him in contact with Victor Hughes and other notorious pirates. In his quest of fortune he had left no stone unturned; witness an attempt to discover the treasure of that tribe of savages so famous in Buenos Ayres and its neighborhood. He had a personal knowledge of the events of the American War of Independence. But if he spoke of the Indies or of America, as he did very rarely with me, and never with any one else, he seemed to regard it as an indiscretion and to repent of it afterward. If humanity and sociability are in some sort a religion, Gobseck might be ranked as an infidel; but though I set myself to study him, I must confess, to my shame, that his real nature was impenetrable up to the very last. I even felt doubts at times as to his sex. If all usurers are like this one, I maintain that they belong to the neuter gender.

"Did he adhere to his mother's religion? Did he look on Gentiles as his legitimate prey? Had he turned Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mahometan, Brahmin, or what not? I never knew anything whatsoever about his religious opin-

ions, and, so far as I could see, he was indifferent rather than incredulous.

"One evening I went in to see this man who had turned himself to gold; the usurer, whom his victims (his clients, as he styled them) were wont to call Daddy Gobseck, perhaps ironically, perhaps by way of antiphrasis. He was sitting in his armchair, motionless as a statue, staring fixedly at the mantel-shelf, where he seemed to read the figures of his statements. A lamp, with a pedestal that had once been green, was burning in the room; but so far from taking color from its smoky light, his face seemed to stand out positively paler against the background. He pointed to a chair set for me, but not a word did he say.

" 'What thoughts can this being have in his mind?' said I to myself. 'Does he know that a God exists; does he know there are such things as feeling, woman, happiness?' I pitied him as I might have pitied a diseased creature. But, at the same time, I knew quite well that while he had millions of francs at his command, he possessed the world no less in idea—that world which he had explored, ransacked, weighed, appraised, and exploited.

" 'Good-day, Daddy Gobseck,' I began.

"He turned his face toward me, with a slight contraction of his bushy, black eyebrows; this characteristic shade of expression in him meant as much as the most jubilant smile on a Southern face.

" 'You look just as gloomy as you did that day when the news came of the failure of that bookseller whose sharpness you admired so much, though you were one of his victims.'

" 'One of his victims?' he repeated, with a look of astonishment.

" 'Yes. Did you not refuse to accept composition at the meeting of creditors until he undertook privately to pay you your debt in full; and did he not give you bills accepted by the insolvent firm; and then, when he set up in business again, did he not pay you the dividend upon those bills of yours, signed as they were by the bankrupt firm?'

"'He was a sharp one, but I had it out of him.'

"'Then have you some bills to protest? To-day is the 30th, I believe.'

"It was the first time that I had spoken to him of money. He looked ironically up at me; then in those bland accents, not unlike the husky tones which the tyro draws from a flute, he answered, 'I am amusing myself.'

"'So you amuse yourself now and again?'

"'Do you imagine that the only poets in the world are those who print their verses?' he asked, with a pitying look and shrug of the shoulders.

"'Poetry in that head!' thought I, for as yet I knew nothing of his life.

"'What life could be as glorious as mine?' he continued, and his eyes lighted up. 'You are young, your mental visions are colored by youthful blood, you see women's faces in the fire, while I see nothing but coals in mine. You have all sorts of beliefs, while I have no beliefs at all. Keep your illusions—if you can. Now I will show you life with the discount taken off. Go wherever you like, or stay at home by the fireside with your wife, there always comes a time when you settle down in a certain groove, the groove of your preference; and then happiness consists in the exercise of your faculties by applying them to realities. Anything more in the way of precept is false. My principles have been various, among various men; I had to change them with every change of latitude. Things that we admire in Europe are punishable in Asia, and a vice in Paris becomes a necessity when you have passed the Azores. There are no such things as hard-and-fast rules; there are only conventions adapted to the climate. Fling a man headlong into one social melting pot after another, and convictions and forms and moral systems become so many meaningless words to him. The one thing that always remains, the one sure instinct that nature has implanted in us, is the instinct of self-preservation. In European society you call this instinct self-inter-

est. If you had lived as long as I have, you would know that there is but one concrete reality invariable enough to be worth caring about, and that is—GOLD. Gold represents every form of human power. I have travelled. I found out that there were either hills or plains everywhere: the plains are monotonous, the hills a weariness; consequently, place may be left out of the question. As to manners; man is man all the world over. The same battle between the poor and the rich is going on everywhere; it is inevitable everywhere; consequently, it is better to exploit than to be exploited. Everywhere you find the man of thews and sinews who toils, and the lymphatic man who torments himself; and pleasures are everywhere the same, for when all sensations are exhausted, all that survives is Vanity—Vanity is the abiding substance of us, the *I* in us. Vanity is only to be satisfied by gold in floods. Our dreams need time and physical means and painstaking thought before they can be realized. Well, gold contains all things in embryo; gold realizes all things for us.

" 'None but fools and invalids can find pleasure in shuffling cards all evening long to find out whether they shall win a few pence at the end. None but drivelling idiots could spend time in inquiring into all that is happening around them, whether Madame Such-a-One slept single on her couch or in company, whether she has more blood than lymph, more temperament than virtue. None but the dupes, who fondly imagine that they are useful to their like, can interest themselves in laying down rules for political guidance amid events which neither they nor any one else foresees, nor ever will foresee. None but simpletons can delight in talking about stage players and repeating their sayings; making the daily promenade of a caged animal over a rather larger area; dressing for others, eating for others, priding themselves on a horse or a carriage such as no neighbor can have until three days later. What is all this but Parisian life summed up in a few phrases? Let us find a higher outlook on life than theirs. Happiness consists either in

strong emotions which drain our vitality, or in methodical occupation which makes existence like a bit of English machinery, working with the regularity of clockwork. A higher happiness than either consists in a curiosity, styled noble, a wish to learn Nature's secrets, or to attempt by artificial means to imitate Nature to some extent. What is this in two words but Science and Art, or passion or calm?—Ah! well, every human passion wrought up to its highest pitch in the struggle for existence comes to parade itself here before me—as I live in calm. As for your scientific curiosity, a kind of wrestling bout in which man is never uppermost, I replace it by an insight into all the springs of action in man and woman. To sum up, the world is mine without effort of mine, and the world has not the slightest hold on me. Listen to this,' he went on, 'I will tell you the history of my morning, and you will divine my pleasures.'

"He got up, pushed the bolt of the door, drew a tapestry curtain across it with a sharp grating sound of the rings on the rod, then he sat down again.

" 'This morning,' he said, 'I had only two amounts to collect; the rest of the bills that were due I gave away instead of cash to my customers yesterday. So much saved, you see, for when I discount a bill I always deduct two francs for a hired brougham—expenses of collection. A pretty thing it would be, would it not, if my clients were to set *me* trudging all over Paris for half a-dozen francs of discount, when no man is my master, and I only pay seven francs in the shape of taxes?

" 'The first bill for a thousand francs was presented by a young fellow, a smart buck with a spangled waistcoat, and an eyeglass, and a tilbury and an English horse, and all the rest of it. The bill bore the signature of one of the prettiest women in Paris, married to a Count, a great landowner. Now, how came that Countess to put her name to a bill of exchange, legally not worth the paper it was written upon, but practically very good business; for these

women, poor things, are afraid of the scandal that a protested bill makes in a family, and would give themselves away in payment sooner than fail? I wanted to find out what that bill of exchange really represented. Was it stupidity, imprudence, love, or charity?

"'The second bill, bearing the signature "Fanny Malvaut," came to me from a linen-draper on the highway to bankruptcy. Now, no creature who has any credit with a bank comes to *me*. The first step to my door means that a man is desperately hard up; that the news of his failure will soon come out; and, most of all, it means that he has been everywhere else first. The stag is always at bay when I see him, and a pack of creditors are hard upon his track. The Countess lived in the Rue du Helder, and my Fanny in the Rue Montmartre. How many conjectures I made as I set out this morning! If these two women were not able to pay, they would show me more respect than they would show their own fathers. What tricks and grimaces would not the Countess try for a thousand francs! She would be so nice to me, she would talk to me in that ingratiating tone peculiar to indorsers of bills, she would pour out a torrent of coaxing words, perhaps she would beg and pray, and I . . .' (here the old man turned his pale eyes upon me)—'and I not to be moved, inexorable!' he continued. 'I am there as the avenger, the apparition of Remorse. So much for hypotheses. I reached the house.

"' "Madame la Comtesse is asleep," says the maid.

"' "When can I see her?"

"' "At twelve o'clock."

"' "Is Madame la Comtesse ill?"

"' "No, sir, but she only came home at three o'clock this morning from a ball."

"' "My name is Gobseck; tell her that I shall call again at twelve o'clock," and out I went, leaving traces of my muddy boots on the carpet which covered the paved staircase. I like to leave mud on a rich man's carpet; it is not petty spite; I like to make them feel a touch of the claws

of Necessity. In the Rue Montmartre I thrust open the old gateway of a poor-looking house, and looked into a dark courtyard where the sunlight never shines. The porter's lodge was grimy, the window looked like the sleeve of some shabby wadded gown—greasy, dirty, and full of holes.

"'"Mlle. Fanny Malvaut?"

"'"She has gone out; but if you have come about a bill, the money is waiting for you."

"'"I will look in again," said I.

"'As soon as I knew that the porter had the money for me, I wanted to know what the girl was like; I pictured her as pretty. The rest of the morning I spent in looking at the prints in the shop windows along the boulevard; then, just as it struck twelve, I went through the Countess's antechamber.

"'"Madame has just this minute rung for me," said the maid; "I don't think she can see you yet."

"'"I will wait," said I, and sat down in an easy-chair.

"'Venetian shutters were opened, and presently the maid came hurrying back.

"'"Come in, sir."

"'From the sweet tone of the girl's voice, I knew that the mistress could not be ready to pay. What a handsome woman it was that I saw in another moment! She had flung an Indian shawl hastily over her bare shoulders, covering herself with it completely, while it revealed the bare outlines of the form beneath. She wore a loose gown trimmed with snowy ruffles, which told plainly that her laundress's bills amounted to something like two thousand francs in the course of a year. Her dark curls escaped from beneath a bright Indian handkerchief, knotted carelessly about her head after the fashion of Creole women. The bed lay in disorder that told of broken slumber. A painter would have paid money to stay a while to see the scene that I saw. Under the luxurious hanging draperies, the pillow, crushed into the depths of an eider-down quilt, its lace

border standing out in contrast against the background of blue silk, bore a vague impress that kindled the imagination. A pair of satin slippers gleamed from the great bear-skin rug spread by the carved mahogany lions at the bed-foot, where she had flung them off in her weariness after the ball. A crumpled gown hung over a chair, the sleeves touching the floor; stockings which a breath would have blown away were twisted about the leg of an easy-chair; white ribbon garters straggled over a settee. A fan of price, half unfolded, glittered on the chimney-piece. Drawers stood open; flowers, diamonds, gloves, a bouquet, a girdle, were littered about. The room was full of vague sweet perfume. And—beneath all the luxury and disorder, beauty and incongruity, I saw Misery crouching in wait for her or for her adorer, Misery rearing its head, for the Countess had begun to feel the edge of those fangs. Her tired face was an epitome of the room strewn with relics of past festival. The scattered gewgaws, pitiable this morning, when gathered together and coherent, had turned heads the night before.

"'What efforts to drink of the Tantalus cup of bliss I could read in these traces of love stricken by the thunderbolt remorse—in this visible presentment of a life of luxury, extravagance, and riot. There were faint red marks on her young face, signs of the fineness of the skin; but her features were coarsened, as it were, and the circles about her eyes were unwontedly dark. Nature nevertheless was so vigorous in her that these traces of past folly did not spoil her beauty. Her eyes glittered. She looked like some *Herodias* of da Vinci's (I have dealt in pictures), so magnificently full of life and energy was she; there was nothing starved nor stinted in feature or outline; she awakened desire; it seemed to me that there was some passion in her yet stronger than love. I was taken with her. It was a long while since my heart had throbbed; so I was paid then and there—for I would give a thousand francs for a sensation that should bring me back memories of youth.

"'"Monsieur," she said, finding a chair for me, "will you be so good as to wait?"

"'"Until this time to-morrow, madame," I said, folding up the bill again. "I cannot legally protest this bill any sooner." And within myself I said—"Pay the price of your luxury, pay for your name, pay for your ease, pay for the monopoly which you enjoy! The rich have invented judges and courts of law to secure their goods, and the guillotine—that candle in which so many an ignorant moth burns his wings. But for you who lie in silk, under silken coverlets, there is remorse, and grinding of teeth beneath a smile, and those fantastical lions' jaws are gaping to set their fangs in your heart."

"'"Protest the bill! Can you mean it?" she cried, with her eyes upon me; "could you have so little consideration for me?"

"'"If the King himself owed money to me, madame, and did not pay it, I should summons him even sooner than any other debtor."

"'While we were speaking, somebody tapped gently at the door.

"'"I cannot see any one," she cried imperiously.

"'"But, Anastasie, I particularly wish to speak to you."

"'"Not just now, dear," she answered in a milder tone, but with no sign of relenting.

"'"What nonsense! You are talking to some one," said the voice, and in came a man who could only be the Count.

"'The Countess gave me a glance. I saw how it was. She was thoroughly in my power. There was a time, when I was young, and might perhaps have been stupid enough not to protest the bill. At Pondicherry, in 1763, I let a woman off, and nicely she paid me out afterward. I deserved it; what call was there for me to trust her?

"'"What does this gentleman want?" asked the Count.

"'I could see that the Countess was trembling from head to foot; the white satin skin of her throat was rough, "turned

to goose flesh," to use the familiar expression. As for me, I laughed in myself without moving a muscle.

" ' "This gentleman is one of my tradesmen," she said.

" 'The Count turned his back on me; I drew the bill half out of my pocket. After that inexorable movement, she came over to me and put a diamond into my hands. "Take it," she said, "and begone."

" 'We exchanged values, and I made my bow and went. The diamond was quite worth twelve hundred francs to me. Out in the courtyard I saw a swarm of flunkeys, brushing their liveries, waxing their boots, and cleaning sumptuous equipages.

" ' "This is what brings these people to me!" said I to myself. "It is to keep up this kind of thing that they steal millions with all due formalities, and betray their country. The great lord, and the little man who apes the great lord, bathes in mud once for all to save himself a splash or two when he goes afoot through the streets."

" 'Just then the great gates were opened to admit a cabriolet. It was the same young fellow who had brought the bill to me.

" ' "Sir," I said, as he alighted, "here are two hundred francs, which I beg you to return to Mme. la Comtesse, and have the goodness to tell her that I hold the pledge which she deposited with me this morning at her disposition for a week."

" 'He took the two hundred francs, and an ironical smile stole over his face; it was as if he had said, "Aha! so she has paid it, has she? . . . Faith, so much the better!" I read the Countess's future in his face. That good-looking, fair-haired young gentleman is a heartless gambler; he will ruin himself, ruin her, ruin her husband, ruin the children, eat up their portions, and work more havoc in Parisian salons than a whole battery of howitzers in a regiment.

" 'I went back to see Mlle. Fanny in the Rue Montmartre, climbed a very steep, narrow staircase, and reached a two-roomed dwelling on the fifth floor. Everything was

as neat as a new ducat. I did not see a speck of dust on the furniture in the first room, where Mlle. Fanny was sitting. Mlle. Fanny herself was a young Parisian girl, quietly dressed, with a delicate fresh face and a winning look. The arrangement of her neatly brushed chestnut hair in a double curve on her forehead lent a refined expression to blue eyes, clear as crystal. The broad daylight streaming in through the short curtains against the window pane fell with softened light on her girlish face. A pile of shaped pieces of linen told me that she was a seamstress. She looked like the spirit of solitude. When I held out the bill, I remarked that she had not been at home when I called in the morning.

"'"But the money was left with the porter's wife," said she.

"'I pretended not to understand.

"'"You go out early, mademoiselle, it seems."

"'"I very seldom leave my room; but when you work all night, you are obliged to take a bath sometimes."

"'I looked at her. A glance told me all about her life. Here was a girl condemned by misfortune to toil, a girl who came of honest farmer folk, for she had still a freckle or two that told of country birth. There was an indefinable atmosphere of goodness about her; I felt as if I were breathing sincerity and frank innocence. It was refreshing to my lungs. Poor innocent child, she had faith in something; there was a crucifix and a sprig or two of green box above her poor little painted wooden bedstead; I felt touched, or somewhat inclined that way. I felt ready to offer to charge no more than twelve per cent, and so give something toward establishing her in a good way of business.

"'"But maybe she has a little youngster of a cousin," I said to myself, "who would raise money on her signature and sponge on the poor girl."

"'So I went away, keeping my generous impulses well under control; for I have frequently had occasion to observe that when benevolence does no harm to him who gives it is the ruin of him who takes. When you came in I was think-

ing that Fanny Malvaut would make a nice little wife; I was thinking of the contrast between her pure, lonely life and the life of the Countess—she has sunk as low as a bill of exchange already, she will sink to the lowest depths of degradation before she has done!'—I scrutinized him during the deep silence that followed, but in a moment he spoke again. 'Well,' he said, 'do you think that it is nothing to have this power of insight into the deepest recesses of the human heart, to embrace so many lives, to see the naked truth underlying it all? There are no two dramas alike: there are hideous sores, deadly chagrins, love scenes, misery that soon will lie under the ripples of the Seine, young men's joys that lead to the scaffold, the laughter of despair, and sumptuous banquets. Yesterday it was a tragedy. A worthy soul of a father drowned himself because he could not support his family. To-morrow is a comedy; some youngster will try to rehearse the scene of M. Dimanche, brought up to date. You have heard people extol the eloquence of our latter day preachers; now and again I have wasted my time by going to hear them; they produced a change in my opinions, but in my conduct (as somebody said, I can't recollect his name), in my conduct—never!—Well, well; these good priests and your Mirabeaus and Vergniauds and the rest of them, are mere stammering beginners compared with these orators of mine.

" 'Often it is some girl in love, some gray-headed merchant on the verge of bankruptcy, some mother with a son's wrongdoing to conceal, some starving artist, some great man whose influence is on the wane, and, for lack of money, is like to lose the fruit of all his labors—the power of their pleading has made me shudder. Sublime actors such as these play for me, for an audience of one, and they cannot deceive me. I can look into their inmost thoughts, and read them as God reads them. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is refused to the holder of the purse-strings to loose and to bind. I am rich enough to buy the consciences of those who control the action of ministers, from their office

boys to their mistresses. Is not that Power?—I can possess the fairest women, receive their softest caresses; is not that Pleasure? And is not your whole social economy summed up in terms of Power and Pleasure?

"'There are ten of us in Paris, silent, unknown kings, the arbiters of your destinies. What is life but a machine set in motion by money? Know this for certain—methods are always confounded with results; you will never succeed in separating the soul from the senses, spirit from matter. Gold is the spiritual basis of existing society.—The ten of us are bound by the ties of common interest; we meet on certain days of the week at the Café Thémis near the Pont Neuf, and there, in conclave, we reveal the mysteries of finance. No fortune can deceive us; we are in possession of family secrets in all directions. We keep a kind of Black Book, in which we note the most important bills issued, drafts on public credit, or on banks, or given and taken in the course of business. We are the Casuists of the Paris Bourse, a kind of Inquisition weighing and analyzing the most insignificant actions of every man of any fortune, and our forecasts are infallible. One of us looks out over the judicial world, one over the financial, another surveys the administrative, and yet another the business world. I myself keep an eye on eldest sons, artists, people in the great world, and gamblers—on the most sensational side of Paris. Every one who comes to us lets us into his neighbor's secrets. Thwarted passion and mortified vanity are great babblers. Vice and disappointment and vindictiveness are the best of all detectives. My colleagues, like myself, have enjoyed all things, are sated with all things, and have reached the point when power and money are loved for their own sake.

"'Here,' he said, indicating his bare, chilly room, 'here the most high-mettled gallant, who chafes at a word and draws sword for a syllable elsewhere, will entreat with clasped hands. There is no city merchant so proud, no woman so vain of her beauty, no soldier of so bold a spirit, but that they entreat me here, one and all, with tears of rage

or anguish in their eyes. Here they kneel—the famous artist, and the man of letters, whose name will go down to posterity. Here, in short' (he lifted his hand to his forehead), 'all the inheritances and all the concerns of all Paris are weighed in the balance. Are you still of the opinion that there are no delights behind the blank mask which so often has amazed you by its impassiveness?' he asked, stretching out that living face which reeked of money.

"I went back to my room, feeling stupefied. The little, wizened, old man had grown great. He had been metamorphosed under my eyes into a strange visionary symbol; he had come to be the power of gold personified. I shrank, shuddering, from life and my kind.

"'Is it really so?' I thought; 'must everything be resolved into gold?'

"I remember that it was long before I slept that night. I saw heaps of gold all about me. My thoughts were full of the lovely Countess; I confess, to my shame, that the vision completely eclipsed another quiet, innocent figure, the figure of the woman who had entered upon a life of toil and obscurity; but on the morrow, through the clouds of slumber, Fanny's sweet face rose before me in all its beauty, and I thought of nothing else."

"Will you take a glass of *eau sucrée?*" asked the Vicomtesse, interrupting Derville.

"I should be glad of it."

"But I can see nothing in this that can touch our concerns," said Mme. de Grandlieu, as she rang the bell.

"Sardanapalus!" cried Derville, flinging out his favorite invocation. "Mademoiselle Camille will be wide awake in a moment if I say that her happiness depended not so long ago upon Daddy Gobseck; but as the old gentleman died at the age of ninety, M. de Restaud will soon be in possession of a handsome fortune. This requires some explanation. As for Fanny Malvaut, you know her; she is my wife."

"Poor fellow, he would admit that, with his usual frank-

ness, with a score of people to hear him!" said the Vicomtesse.

"I would proclaim it to the universe," said the attorney.

"Go on, drink your glass, my poor Derville. You will never be anything but the happiest and the best of men."

"I left you in the Rue du Helder," remarked the uncle, raising his face after a gentle doze. "You had gone to see a Countess; what have you done with her?"

"A few days after my conversation with the old Dutchman," Derville continued, "I sent in my thesis, and became first a licentiate in law, and afterward an advocate. The old miser's opinion of me went up considerably. He consulted me (gratuitously) on all the ticklish bits of business which he undertook when he had made quite sure how he stood, business which would have seemed unsafe to any ordinary practitioner. This man, over whom no one appeared to have the slightest influence, listened to my advice with something like respect. It is true that he always found that it turned out very well.

"At length I became head-clerk in the office where I had worked for three years, and then I left the Rue des Grès for rooms in my employer's house. I had my board and lodging and a hundred and fifty francs per month. It was a great day for me!

"When I went to bid the usurer good-by, he showed no sign of feeling, he was neither cordial nor sorry to lose me, he did not ask me to come to see him, and only gave me one of those glances which seemed in some sort to reveal a power of second-sight.

"By the end of a week my old neighbor came to see me with a tolerably thorny bit of business, an expropriation, and he continued to ask my advice with as much freedom as if he paid for it.

"My principal was a man of pleasure and expensive tastes; before the second year (1818–1819) was out he had

got himself into difficulties, and was obliged to sell his practice. A professional connection in those days did not fetch the present exorbitant prices, and my principal asked a hundred and fifty thousand francs. Now an active man, of competent knowledge and intelligence, might hope to pay off the capital in ten years, paying interest and living respectably in the meantime—if he could command confidence. But I was the seventh child of a small tradesman at Noyon, I had not a sou to my name, nor personal knowledge of any capitalist but Daddy Gobseck. An ambitious idea, and an indefinable glimmer of hope, put heart into me. To Gobseck I betook myself, and slowly one evening I made my way to the Rue des Grès. My heart thumped heavily as I knocked at his door in the gloomy house. I recollected all the things that he used to tell me, at a time when I myself was very far from suspecting the violence of the anguish awaiting those who crossed his threshold. Now it was I who was about to beg and pray like so many others.

"'Well, no, not *that*,' I said to myself; 'an honest man must keep his self-respect wherever he goes. Success is not worth cringing for; let us show him a front as decided as his own.'

"Daddy Gobseck had taken my room since I left the house, so as to have no neighbor; he had made a little grated window too in his door since then, and did not open until he had taken a look at me and saw who I was.

"'Well,' said he, in his thin, flute notes, 'so your principal is selling his practice.'

"'How did you know that?' said I; 'he has not spoken of it as yet except to me.'

"The old man's lips were drawn in puckers, like a curtain, to either corner of his mouth, as a soundless smile bore a hard glance company.

"'Nothing else would have brought you here,' he said dryly, after a pause, which I spent in confusion.

"'Listen to me, M. Gobseck,' I began, with such serenity as I could assume before the old man, who gazed at me with

steady eyes. There was a clear light burning in them that disconcerted me.

"He made a gesture as if to bid me 'Go on.' 'I know that it is not easy to work on your feelings, so I will not waste my eloquence on the attempt to put my position before you—I am a penniless clerk, with no one to look to but you, and no heart in the world but yours can form a clear idea of my probable future. Let us leave hearts out of the question. Business is business, and business is not carried on with sentimentality like romances. Now to the facts. My principal's practice is worth in his hands about twenty thousand francs per annum; in my hands, I think it would bring in forty thousand. He is willing to sell it for a hundred and fifty thousand francs. And *here*,' I said, striking my forehead, 'I feel that if you would loan me the purchase-money, I could clear it off in ten years' time.'

"'Come, that is plain speaking,' said Daddy Gobseck, and he held out his hand and grasped mine. 'Nobody since I have been in business has stated the motives of his visit more clearly. Guarantees?' asked he, scanning me from head to foot. 'None to give,' he added after a pause. 'How old are you?'

"'Twenty-five in ten days' time,' said I, 'or I could not open the matter.'

"'Precisely.'

"'Well?'

"'It is possible.'

"'My word, we must be quick about it, or I shall have some one buying over my head.'

"'Bring your certificate of birth round to morrow morning, and we will talk. I will think it over.'

"Next morning, at eight o'clock, I stood in the old man's room. He took the document, put on his spectacles, coughed, spat, wrapped himself up in his black greatcoat, and read the whole certificate through from beginning to end. Then he turned it over and over, looked at me,

coughed again, fidgeted about in his chair, and said, 'We will try to arrange this bit of business.'

"I trembled.

"'I make fifty per cent on my capital,' he continued, 'sometimes I make a hundred, two hundred, five hundred per cent.'

"I turned pale at the words.

"'But as we are acquaintances, I shall be satisfied to take twelve and a half per cent per'—(he hesitated)—'well, yes, from you I would be content to take thirteen per cent per annum. Will that suit you?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'But if it is too much, stick up for yourself, Grotius!' (a name he jokingly gave me). 'When I ask you for thirteen per cent, it is all in the way of business; look into it, see if you can pay it; I don't like a man to agree too easily. Is it too much?'

"'No,' said I, 'I will make up for it by working a little harder.'

"'Gad! your clients will pay for it!' said he, looking at me wickedly out of the corner of his eyes.

"'No, by all the devils in hell!' cried I, 'it shall be I who will pay. I would sooner cut my hand off than flay people.'

"'Good-night,' said Daddy Gobseck.

"'Why, fees are all according to scale,' I added.

"'Not for compromises and settlements out of Court, and cases where litigants come to terms,' said he. 'You can send in a bill for thousands of francs, six thousand even at a swoop (it depends on the importance of the case), for conferences with So-and-so, and expenses, and drafts, and memorials, and your jargon. A man must learn to look out for business of this kind. I will recommend you as a most competent, clever attorney. I will send you such a lot of work of this sort that your colleagues will be fit to burst with envy. Werbrust, Palma, and Gigonnet, my cronies, shall hand over their expropriations to you; they have

plenty of them, the Lord knows! So you will have two practices—the one you are buying, and the other I will build up for you. You ought almost to pay me fifteen per cent on my loan.'

"'So be it, but no more,' said I, with the firmness which means that a man is determined not to concede another point.

"Daddy Gobseck's face relaxed; he looked pleased with me.

"'I shall pay the money over to your principal myself,' said he, 'so as to establish a lien on the purchase and caution-money.'

"'Oh, anything you like in the way of guarantees.'

"'And besides that, you will give me bills for the amount made payable to a third party (name left blank), fifteen bills of ten thousand francs each.'

"'Well, so long as it is acknowledged in writing that this is a double—'

"'No!' Gobseck broke in upon me. 'No! Why should I trust you any more than you trust me?'

"I kept silence.

"'And furthermore,' he continued, with a sort of good-humor, 'you will give me your advice without charging fees as long as I live, will you not?'

"'So be it; so long as there is no outlay.'

"'Precisely,' said he. 'Ah, by the by, you will allow me to go to see you?' (Plainly the old man found it not so easy to assume the air of good-humor.)

"'I shall always be glad.'

"'Ah! yes, but it would be very difficult to arrange of a morning. You will have your affairs to attend to, and I have mine.'

"'Then come in the evening.'

"'Oh, no!' he answered briskly, 'you ought to go into society and see your clients, and I myself have my friends at my café.'

"'His friends!' thought I to myself.—'Very well,' said I, 'why not come at dinner-time?'

"'That is the time,' said Gobseck, 'after 'Change, at five o'clock. Good, you will see me Wednesdays and Saturdays. We will talk over business like a pair of friends. Aha! I am gay sometimes. Just give me the wing of a partridge and a glass of champagne, and we will have our chat together. I know a great many things that can be told now at this distance of time; I will teach you to know men, and what is more—women!'

"'Oh! a partridge and a glass of champagne if you like.'

"'Don't do anything foolish, or I shall lose my faith in you. And don't set up housekeeping in a grand way. Just one old general servant. I will come and see that you keep your health. I have a capital invested in your head, he! he! so I am bound to look after you. There, come round in the evening and bring your principal with you!'

"'Would you mind telling me, if there is no harm in asking, what was the good of my birth certificate in this business?' I asked, when the little old man and I stood on the doorstep.

"Jean-Esther Van Gobseck shrugged his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and said, 'What blockheads youngsters are! Learn, master attorney (for learn you must, if you don't mean to be taken in), that integrity and brains in a man under thirty are commodities which can be mortgaged. After that age there is no counting on a man.'

"And with that he shut the door.

"Three months later I was an attorney. Before very long, madame, it was my good fortune to undertake the suit for the recovery of your estates. I won the day, and my name became known. In spite of the exorbitant rate of interest, I paid off Gobseck in less than five years. I married Fanny Malvaut, whom I loved with all my heart. There was a parallel between her life and mine, between our hard work and our luck, which increased the strength of feeling on either side. One of her uncles, a well-to-do farmer, died and left her seventy thousand francs, which

helped to clear off the loan. From that day my life has been nothing but happiness and prosperity. Nothing is more utterly uninteresting than a happy man, so let us say no more on that head, and return to the rest of the characters.

"About a year after the purchase of the practice, I was dragged into a bachelor breakfast-party given by one of our number who had lost a bet to a young man greatly in vogue in the fashionable world. M. de Trailles, the flower of the dandyism of that day, enjoyed a prodigious reputation."

"But he is still enjoying it," put in the Comte de Born. "No one wears his clothes with a finer air, nor drives a tandem with a better grace. It is Maxime's gift; he can gamble, eat, and drink more gracefully than any man in the world. He is a judge of horses, hats, and pictures. All the women lose their heads over him. He always spends something like a hundred thousand francs a year, and no creature can discover that he has an acre of land or a single dividend warrant. The typical knight-errant of our salons, our boudoirs, our boulevards, an amphibian half-way between a man and a woman—Maxime de Trailles is a singular being, fit for anything, and good for nothing, quite as capable of perpetrating a benefit as of planning a crime; sometimes base, sometimes noble, more often bespattered with mire than besprinkled with blood, knowing more of anxiety than of remorse, more concerned with his digestion than with any mental process, shamming passion, feeling nothing. Maxime de Trailles is a brilliant link between the hulks and the best society; he belongs to the eminently intelligent class from which a Mirabeau, or a Pitt, or a Richelieu springs at times, though it is more wont to produce Counts of Horn, Fouquier-Tinvilles, and Coignards."

"Well," pursued Derville, when he had heard the Vicomtesse's brother to the end, "I had heard a good deal about this individual from poor old Goriot, a client of mine; and I had already been at some pains to avoid the dangerous honor of his acquaintance, for I came across him sometimes in society. Still, my chum was so pressing about this break-

fast-party of his that I could not well get out of it, unless I wished to earn a name for squeamishness. Madame, you could hardly imagine what a bachelor's breakfast-party is like. It means superb display and a studied refinement seldom seen; the luxury of a miser when vanity leads him to be sumptuous for a day.

"You are surprised as you enter the room at the neatness of the table, dazzling by reason of its silver and crystal and linen damask. Life is here in full bloom; the young fellows are graceful to behold; they smile and talk in low, demure voices like so many brides; everything about them looks girlish. Two hours later you might take the room for a battlefield after a fight. Broken glasses, serviettes crumpled and torn to rags lie strewn about among the nauseous looking remnants of food on the dishes. There is an uproar that stuns you, jesting toasts, a fire of witticisms and bad jokes; faces are empurpled, eyes inflamed and expressionless; unintentional confidences tell you the whole truth. Bottles are smashed, and songs trolled out in the height of a diabolical racket; men call each other out, hang on each other's necks, or fall to fisticuffs; the room is full of a horrid, close scent made up of a hundred odors, and noise enough for a hundred voices. No one has any notion of what he is eating or drinking or saying. Some are depressed, others babble; one will turn monomaniac, repeating the same word over and over again like a bell set jangling; another tries to keep the tumult within bounds; the steadiest will propose an orgy. If any one in possession of his faculties should come in, he would think that he had interrupted a Bacchanalian rite.

"It was in the thick of such a chaos that M. de Trailles tried to insinuate himself into my good graces. My head was fairly clear, I was upon my guard. As for him, though he pretended to be decently drunk, he was perfectly cool, and knew very well what he was about. How it was done I do not know, but the upshot of it was that when we left Grignon's rooms about nine o'clock in the evening, M. de

Trailles had thoroughly bewitched me. I had given him my promise that I would introduce him the next day to our Papa Gobseck. The words 'honor,' 'virtue,' 'countess,' 'honest woman,' and 'ill-luck' were mingled in his discourse with magical potency, thanks to that golden tongue of his.

"When I awoke next morning, and tried to recollect what I had done the day before, it was with great difficulty that I could make a connected tale from my impressions. At last, it seemed to me that the daughter of one of my clients was in danger of losing her reputation, together with her husband's love and esteem, if she could not get fifty thousand francs together in the course of the morning. There had been gaming debts, and carriage-builders' accounts, money lost to Heaven knows whom. My magician of a boon companion had impressed it upon me that she was rich enough to make good these reverses by a few years of economy. But only now did I begin to guess the reasons of his urgency. I confess, to my shame, that I had not the shadow of a doubt but that it was a matter of importance that Daddy Gobseck should make it up with this dandy. I was dressing when the young gentleman appeared.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, after the usual greetings, 'I fail to see why you should need me to effect an introduction to Van Gobseck, the most civil and smooth-spoken of capitalists. Money will be forthcoming if he has any, or rather, if you can give him adequate security.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, 'it does not enter into my thoughts to force you to do me a service, even though you have passed your word.'

"'Sardanapalus!' said I to myself, 'am I going to let that fellow imagine that I will not keep my word with him?'

"'I had the honor of telling you yesterday,' said he, 'that I had fallen out with Daddy Gobseck most inopportunely; and as there is scarcely another man in Paris who can come down on the nail with a hundred thousand francs, at the end of the month, I begged of you to make my peace with him. But let us say no more about it—'

"M. de Trailles looked at me with civil insult in his expression, and made as if he would take his leave.

" 'I am ready to go with you,' said I.

"When we reached the Rue des Grès, my dandy looked about him with a circumspection and uneasiness that set me wondering. His face grew livid, flushed, and yellow, turn and turn about, and by the time that Gobseck's door came in sight the perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. We were just getting out of the cabriolet, when a hackney cab turned into the street. My companion's hawk's eye detected a woman in the depths of the vehicle. His face lighted up with a gleam of almost savage joy; he called to a little boy who was passing, and gave him his horse to hold. Then we went up to the old bill discounter.

" 'M. Gobseck,' said I, 'I have brought one of my most intimate friends to see you (whom I trust as I would trust the Devil,' I added for the old man's private ear). 'To oblige me you will do your best for him (at the ordinary rate), and pull him out of his difficulty (if it suits your convenience).'

"M. de Trailles made his bow to Gobseck, took a seat, and listened to us with a courtier-like attitude; its charming humility would have touched your heart to see, but my Gobseck sits in his chair by the fireside without moving a muscle or changing a feature. He looked very like the statue of Voltaire under the peristyle of the Théâtre-Français, as you see it of an evening; he had partly risen as if to bow, and the skull cap that covered the top of his head, and the narrow strip of sallow forehead exhibited, completed his likeness to the man of marble.

" 'I have no money to spare except for my own clients,' said he.

" 'So you are cross because I may have tried in other quarters to ruin myself?' laughed the Count.

" 'Ruin yourself!' repeated Gobseck ironically.

" 'Were you about to remark that it is impossible to ruin a man who has nothing?' inquired the dandy. 'Why, I

defy you to find a better *stock* in Paris!' he cried, swinging round on his heels.

"This half-earnest buffoonery produced not the slightest effect upon Gobseck.

" 'Am I not on intimate terms with the Ronquerolles, the Marsays, the Franchessinis, the two Vandenesses, the Ajuda-Pintos—all the most fashionable young men in Paris, in short? A prince and an ambassador (you know them both) are my partners at play. I draw my revenues from London and Carlsbad and Baden and Bath. Is not this the most brilliant of all industries!'

" 'True.'

" 'You make a sponge of me, begad! you do. You encourage me to go and swell myself out in society, so that you can squeeze me when I am hard up; but you yourselves are sponges, just as I am, and death will give you a squeeze some day.'

" 'That is possible.'

" 'If there were no spendthrifts, what would become of you? The pair of us are like soul and body.'

" 'Precisely so.'

" 'Come, now, give us your hand, Granddaddy Gobseck, and be magnanimous if this is "true" and "possible" and "precisely so." '

" 'You come to me,' the usurer answered coldly, 'because Girard, Palma, Werbrust, and Gigonnet are full up of your paper; they are offering it at a loss of fifty per cent; and as it is likely they only gave you half the figure on the face of the bills, they are not worth five-and-twenty per cent of their supposed value. I am your most obedient! Can I in common decency lend a stiver to a man who owes thirty thousand francs, and has not one farthing?' Gobseck continued. 'The day before yesterday you lost ten thousand francs at a ball at the Baron de Nucingen's.'

" 'Sir,' said the Count, with rare impudence, 'my affairs are no concern of yours,' and he looked the old man up and down. 'A man has no debts till payment is due.'

"'True.'

"'My bills will be duly met.'

"'That is possible.'

"'And at this moment the question between you and me is simply whether the security I am going to offer is sufficient for the sum I have come to borrow.'

"'Precisely.'

"A cab stopped at the door, and the sound of wheels filled the room.

"'I will bring something directly which perhaps will satisfy you,' cried the young man, and he left the room.

"'Oh! my son,' exclaimed Gobseck, rising to his feet, and stretching out his arms to me, 'if he has good security, you have saved my life. It would be the death of me. Werbrust and Gigonnet imagined that they were going to play off a trick on me; and now, thanks to you, I shall have a good laugh at their expense to-night.'

"There was something frightful about the old man's ecstasy. It was the one occasion when he opened his heart to me; and that flash of joy, swift though it was, will never be effaced from my memory.

"'Favor me so far as to stay here,' he added. 'I am armed, and a sure shot. I have gone tiger-hunting, and fought on the deck when there was nothing for it but to win or die; but I don't care to trust yonder elegant scoundrel.'

"He sat down again in his armchair before his bureau, and his face grew pale and impassive as before.

"'Ah!' he continued, turning to me, 'you will see that lovely creature I once told you about; I can hear a fine lady's step in the corridor; it is she, no doubt;' and, as a matter of fact, the young man came in with a woman on his arm. I recognized the Countess, whose levée Gobseck had described for me, one of old Goriot's two daughters.

"The Countess did not see me at first; I stayed where I was in the window bay, with my face against the pane; but I saw her give Maxime a suspicious glance as she came into the money-lender's damp, dark room. So beautiful she

was that in spite of her faults I felt sorry for her. There was a terrible storm of anguish in her heart; her haughty, proud features were drawn and distorted with pain which she strove in vain to disguise. The young man had come to be her evil genius. I admired Gobseck, whose perspicacity had foreseen their future four years ago at the first bill which she indorsed.

" 'Probably,' said I to myself, 'this monster with the angel's face controls every possible spring of action in her: rules her through vanity, jealousy, pleasure, and the current of life in the world.' "

The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu broke in on the story.

"Why, the woman's very virtues have been turned against her," she exclaimed. "He has made her shed tears of devotion, he has brought out the utmost natural generosity of woman, and then abused her kindness and made her pay very dearly for unhallowed bliss."

Derville did not understand the signs which Mme. de Grandlieu made to him.

"I confess," he said, "that I had no inclination to shed tears over the lot of this unhappy creature, so brilliant in society, so repulsive to eyes that could read her heart; I shuddered rather at the sight of her murderer, a young angel with such a clear brow, such red lips and white teeth, such a winning smile. There they stood before their judge, he scrutinizing them much as some old fifteenth-century Dominican inquisitor might have peered into the dungeons of the Holy Office while the torture was administered to two Moors.

"The Countess spoke tremulously. 'Sir,' she said, 'is there any way of obtaining the value of these diamonds, and of keeping the right of repurchase?' She held out a jewel-case.

" 'Yes, madame,' I put in, and came forward.

"She looked at me, and a shudder ran through her as she recognized me, and gave me the glance which means, 'Say nothing of this,' all the world over.

" 'This,' said I, 'constitutes a sale with faculty of redemp-

tion, as it is called, a formal agreement to transfer and deliver over a piece of property, either real estate or personalty, for a given time, on the expiry of which the previous owner recovers his title to the property in question, upon payment of a stipulated sum.'

"She breathed more freely. The Count looked black; he had grave doubts whether Gobseck would lend very much on the diamonds after such a fall in their value. Gobseck, impassive as ever, had taken up his magnifying glass, and was quietly scrutinizing the jewels. If I were to live for a hundred years, I should never forget the sight of his face at that moment. There was a flush in his pale cheeks; his eyes seemed to have caught the sparkle of the stones, for there was an unnatural glitter in them. He rose and went to the light, holding the diamonds close to his toothless mouth, as if he meant to devour them; mumbling vague words over them, holding up bracelets, sprays, necklaces, and tiaras one after another, to judge of their water, whiteness, and cutting; taking them out of the jewel-case and putting them in again, letting the play of the light bring out all their fires. He was more like a child than an old man; or, rather, childhood and dotage seemed to meet in him.

"'Fine stones! The set would have fetched three hundred thousand francs before the Revolution. What water! Genuine Asiatic diamonds from Golconda or Visapur. Do you know what they are worth? No, no; no one in Paris but Gobseck can appreciate them. In the time of the Empire such a set would have cost another two hundred thousand francs!'

"He gave a disgusted shrug, and added:

"'But now diamonds are going down in value every day. The Brazilians have swamped the market with them since the Peace; but the Indian stones are a better color. Others wear them now besides court ladies. Does madame go to court?'

"While he flung out these terrible words, he examined one stone after another with delight which no words can describe.

"'Flawless!' he said. 'Here is a speck! . . . here is a flaw! . . . A fine stone that!'

"His haggard face was so lighted up by the sparkling jewels that it put me in mind of a dingy old mirror, such as you see in country inns. The glass receives every luminous image without reflecting the light, and a traveller bold enough to look for his face in it beholds a man in an apoplectic fit.

"'Well?' asked the Count, clapping Gobseck on the shoulder.

"The old boy trembled. He put down his playthings on his bureau, took his seat, and was a money-lender once more—hard, cold, and polished as a marble column.

"'How much do you want?'

"'One hundred thousand francs for three years,' said the Count.

"'That is possible,' said Gobseck, and from a mahogany box (Gobseck's jewel-case) he drew out a faultlessly adjusted pair of scales!

"He weighed the diamonds, calculating the value of stones and setting at sight (Heaven knows how!), delight and severity struggling in the expression of his face the meanwhile. The Countess was plunged in a kind of stupor; to me, watching her, it seemed that she was fathoming the depths of the abyss into which she had fallen. There was remorse still left in that woman's soul. Perhaps a hand held out in human charity might save her. I would try.

"'Are the diamonds your personal property, madame?' I asked in a clear voice.

"'Yes, monsieur,' she said, looking at me with proud eyes.

"'Make out the deed of purchase with power of redemption, chatterbox,' said Gobseck to me, resigning his chair at the bureau in my favor.

"'Madame is without doubt a married woman?' I tried again.

"She nodded abruptly.

"'Then I will not draw up the deed,' said I.

"'And why not?' asked Gobseck.

"'Why not?' echoed I, as I drew the old man into the bay window so as to speak aside with him. 'Why not? This woman is under her husband's control; the agreement would be void in law; you could not possibly assert your ignorance of a fact recorded on the very face of the document itself. You would be compelled at once to produce the diamonds deposited with you, according to the weight, value, and cutting therein described.'

"Gobseck cut me short with a nod, and turned toward the guilty couple.

"'He is right!' he said. 'That puts the whole thing in a different light. Eighty thousand francs down, and you leave the diamonds with me,' he added, in the husky, flute-like voice. 'In the way of property, possession is as good as a title.'

"'But—' objected the young man.

"'You can take it or leave it,' continued Gobseck, returning the jewel-case to the lady as he spoke.

"'I have too many risks to run.'

"'It would be better to throw yourself at your husband's feet,' I bent to whisper in her ear.

"The usurer doubtless knew what I was saying from the movement of my lips. He gave me a cool glance. The Count's face grew livid. The Countess was visibly wavering. Maxime stepped up to her, and, low as he spoke, I could catch the words:

"'Adieu, dear Anastasie, may you be happy! As for me, by to-morrow my troubles will be over.'

"'Sir!' cried the lady, turning to Gobseck, 'I accept your offer.'

"'Come, now,' returned Gobseck. 'You have been a long time in coming to it, my fair lady.'

"He wrote out a check for fifty thousand francs on the Bank of France, and handed it to the Countess.

"'Now,' continued he with a smile, such a smile as you

will see in portraits of M. Voltaire, 'now I will give you the rest of the amount in bills, thirty thousand francs' worth of paper as good as bullion. This gentleman here has just said, "My bills will be met when they are due," ' added he, producing certain drafts bearing the Count's signature, all protested the day before at the request of some of the confraternity, who had probably made them over to him (Gobseck) at a considerably reduced figure.

"The young man growled out something, in which the words 'Old scoundrel!' were audible. Daddy Gobseck did not move an eyebrow. He drew a pair of pistols out of a pigeon-hole, remarking coolly:

" 'As the insulted man, I fire first.'

" 'Maxime, you owe this gentleman an explanation,' cried the trembling Countess in a low voice.

" 'I had no intention of giving offence,' stammered Maxime.

" 'I am quite sure of that,' Gobseck answered calmly; 'you had no intention of meeting your bills, that was all.'

"The Countess rose, bowed, and vanished with a great dread gnawing her, I doubt not. M. de Trailles was bound to follow, but before he went he managed to say:

" 'If either of you gentlemen should forget himself, I will have his blood, or he will have mine.'

" 'Amen!' called Daddy Gobseck as he put his pistols back in their place; 'but a man must have blood in his veins though before he can risk it, my son, and you have nothing but mud in yours.'

"When the door was closed, and the two vehicles had gone, Gobseck rose to his feet and began to prance about.

" 'I have the diamonds! I have the diamonds!' he cried again and again, 'the beautiful diamonds! such diamonds! and tolerably cheaply. Aha! ah! Werbrust and Gigonnet, you thought you had old Papa Gobseck! *Ego sum papa!* I am master of the lot of you! Paid! paid, principal and interest! How silly they will look to-night when

I shall come out with this story between two games of dominos!'

"The dark glee, the savage ferocity aroused by the possession of a few water-white pebbles, set me shuddering. I was dumb with amazement.

"'Aha! There you are, my boy!' said he. 'We will dine together. We will have some fun at your place, for I haven't a home of my own, and these restaurants, with their broths, and sauces, and wines, would poison the Devil himself.'

"Something in my face suddenly brought back the usual cold, impassive expression to his.

"'You don't understand it,' he said, and sitting down by the hearth he put a tin saucepan full of milk on the brazier.—'Will you breakfast with me?' continued he. 'Perhaps there will be enough here for two.'

"'Thanks,' said I, 'I do not breakfast till noon.'

"I had scarcely spoken before hurried footsteps sounded from the passage. The stranger stopped at Gobseck's door and rapped; there was that in the knock which suggested a man transported with rage. Gobseck reconnoitred him through the grating; then he opened the door, and in came a man of thirty-five or so, judged harmless apparently in spite of his anger. The new-comer, who was quite plainly dressed, bore a strong resemblance to the late Duc de Richelieu. You must often have met him, he was the Countess's husband, a man with the aristocratic figure (permit the expression to pass) peculiar to statesmen of your faubourg.

"'Sir,' said this person, addressing himself to Gobseck, who had quite recovered his tranquillity, 'did my wife go out of this house just now?'

"'That is possible.'

"'Well, sir? do you not take my meaning?'

"'I have not the honor of the acquaintance of my lady your wife,' returned Gobseck. 'I have had a good many visitors this morning, women and men, and mannish young

ladies, and young gentlemen who look like young ladies. I should find it very hard to say—"

"'A truce to jesting, sir! I mean the woman who has this moment gone out from you.'

"'How can I know whether she is your wife or not? I never had the pleasure of seeing you before.'

"'You are mistaken, M. Gobseck,' said the Count, with profound irony in his voice. 'We have met before, one morning in my wife's bedroom. You had come to demand payment for a bill—no bill of hers.'

"'It was no business of mine to inquire what value she had received for it,' said Gobseck, with a malignant look at the Count. 'I had come by the bill in the way of business. At the same time, monsieur,' continued Gobseck, quietly pouring coffee into his bowl of milk, without a trace of excitement or hurry in his voice, 'you will permit me to observe that your right to enter my house and expostulate with me is far from proven to my mind. I came of age in the sixty-first year of the preceding century.'

"'Sir,' said the Count, 'you have just bought family diamonds, which do not belong to my wife, for a mere trifle.'

"'Without feeling it incumbent upon me to tell you my private affairs, I will tell you this much, M. le Comte—if Mme. la Comtesse has taken your diamonds, you should have sent a circular round to all the jewellers, giving them notice not to buy them; she might have sold them separately.'

"'You know my wife, sir!' roared the Count.

"'True.'

"'She is in her husband's power.'

"'That is possible.'

"'She had no right to dispose of those diamonds—'

"'Precisely.'

"'Very well, sir?'

"'Very well, sir. I know your wife, and she is in her husband's power; I am quite willing, she is in the power of a good many people; but—I—do—*not*—know—your dia-

monds. If Mme. la Comtesse can put her name to a bill, she can go into business of course, and buy and sell diamonds on her own account. The thing is plain on the face of it!'

"'Good day, sir!' cried the Count, now white with rage. 'There are courts of justice.'

"'Quite so.'

"'This gentleman here,' he added, indicating me, 'was a witness of the sale.'

"'That is possible.'

"The Count turned to go. Feeling the gravity of the affair, I suddenly put in between the two belligerents.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, 'you are right, and M. Gobseck is by no means in the wrong. You could not prosecute the purchaser without bringing your wife into court, and the whole of the odium would not fall on her. I am an attorney, and I owe it to myself, and still more to my professional position, to declare that the diamonds of which you speak were purchased by M. Gobseck in my presence; but, in my opinion, it would be unwise to dispute the legality of the sale, especially as the goods are not readily recognizable. In equity your contention would lie, in law it would collapse. M. Gobseck is too honest a man to deny that the sale was a profitable transaction, more especially as my conscience, no less than my duty, compels me to make the admission. But once bring the case into a court of law, M. le Comte, the issue would be doubtful. My advice to you is to come to terms with M. Gobseck, who can plead that he bought the diamonds in all good faith; you would be bound in any case to return the purchase-money. Consent to an arrangement, with power to redeem at the end of seven or eight months, or a year even, or any convenient lapse of time, for the repayment of the sum borrowed by Mme. la Comtesse, unless you would prefer to repurchase them outright and give security for repayment.'

"Gobseck dipped his bread into the bowl of coffee, and ate with perfect indifference; but at the words 'come to

terms,' he looked at me as who should say, 'A fine fellow that! he has learned something from my lessons!' And I, for my part, riposted with a glance, which he understood uncommonly well. The business was dubious and shady; there was pressing need of coming to terms. Gobseck could not deny all knowledge of it, for I should appear as a witness. The Count thanked me with a smile of goodwill.

"In the debate which followed, Gobseck showed greed enough and skill enough to baffle a whole congress of diplomatists; but in the end I drew up an instrument, in which the Count acknowledged the receipt of eighty-five thousand francs, interest included, in consideration of which Gobseck undertook to return the diamonds to the Count.

" 'What waste!' exclaimed he as he put his signature to the agreement. 'How is it possible to bridge such a gulf?'

" 'Have you many children, sir?' Gobseck asked gravely.

"The Count winced at the question; it was as if the old money-lender, like an experienced physician, had put his finger at once on the sore spot. The Comtesse's husband did not reply.

" 'Well,' said Gobseck, taking the pained silence for answer, 'I know your story by heart. The woman is a fiend, but perhaps you love her still; I can well believe it; she made an impression on me. Perhaps, too, you would rather save your fortune, and keep it for one or two of your children? Well, fling yourself into the whirlpool of society, lose that fortune at play, come to Gobseck pretty often. The world will say that I am a Jew, a Tartar, a usurer, a pirate, will say that I have ruined you! I snap my fingers at them! If anybody insults me, I lay my man out; nobody is a surer shot nor handles a rapier better than your servant. And every one knows it. Then, have a friend —if you can find one—and make over your property to him by a fictitious sale. You call that a *fidei commissum*, don't you?' he asked, turning to me.

"The Count seemed to be entirely absorbed in his own thoughts.

"'You shall have your money to-morrow,' he said, 'have the diamonds in readiness,' and he went.

"'There goes one who looks to me to be as stupid as an honest man,' Gobseck said coolly when the Count had gone.

"'Say rather stupid as a man of passionate nature.'

"'The Count owes you your fee for drawing up the agreement!' Gobseck called after me as I took my leave.

"One morning, a few days after the scene which initiated me into the terrible depths beneath the surface of the life of a woman of fashion, the Count came into my private office.

"'I have come to consult you on a matter of grave moment,' he said, 'and I begin by telling you that I have perfect confidence in you, as I hope to prove to you. Your behavior to Mme. de Grandlieu is above all praise,' the Count went on. (You see, madame, that you have paid me a thousand times over for a very simple matter.)

"I bowed respectfully, and replied that I had done nothing but the duty of an honest man.

"'Well,' the Count went on, 'I have made a great many inquiries about the singular personage to whom you owe your position. And from all that I can learn, Gobseck is a philosopher of the Cynic school. What do you think of his probity?'

"'M. le Comte,' said I, 'Gobseck is my benefactor—at fifteen per cent,' I added, laughing. 'But his avarice does not authorize me to paint him to the life for a stranger's benefit.'

"'Speak out, sir. Your frankness cannot injure Gobseck or yourself. I do not expect to find an angel in a pawnbroker.'

"'Daddy Gobseck,' I began, 'is intimately convinced of the truth of the principle which he takes for a rule of life. In his opinion, money is a commodity which you may sell cheap or dear, according to circumstances, with a clear conscience. A capitalist, by charging a high rate of interest, becomes in his eyes a secured partner by anticipation in the

profits of a paying concern or speculation. Apart from the peculiar philosophical views of human nature and financial principles, which enable him to behave like a usurer, I am fully persuaded that, out of his business, he is the most loyal and upright soul in Paris. There are two men in him; he is petty and great—a miser and a philosopher. If I were to die and leave a family behind me, he would be the guardian whom I should appoint. This was how I came to see Gobseck in this light, monsieur. I know nothing of his past life. He may have been a pirate, may, for anything I know, have been all over the world, trafficking in diamonds, or men, or women, or State secrets; but this I affirm of him—never has human soul been more thoroughly tempered and tried. When I paid off my loan, I asked him, with a little circumlocution of course, how it was that he had made me pay such an exorbitant rate of interest; and why, seeing that I was a friend, and he meant to do me a kindness, he should not have yielded to the wish and made it complete.— 'My son,'' he said, ''I released you from all need to feel any gratitude by giving you ground for the belief that you owed me nothing.''—So we are the best friends in the world. That answer, monsieur, gives you the man better than any amount of description.'

''I have made up my mind once and for all,' said the Count. 'Draw up the necessary papers; I am going to transfer my property to Gobseck. I have no one but you to trust to in the draft of the counter-deed, which will declare that this transfer is a simulated sale, and that Gobseck as trustee will administer my estate (as he knows how to administer), and undertakes to make over my fortune to my eldest son when he comes of age. Now, sir, this I must tell you: I should be afraid to have that precious document in my own keeping. My boy is so fond of his mother that I cannot trust him with it. So dare I beg of you to keep it for me? In case of death, Gobseck would make you legatee of my property. Every contingency is provided for.'

"The Count paused for a moment. He seemed greatly agitated.

"'A thousand pardons,' he said at length; 'I am in great pain, and have very grave misgivings as to my health. Recent troubles have disturbed me very painfully, and forced me to take this great step.'

"'Allow me first to thank you, monsieur,' said I, 'for the trust you place in me. But I am bound to deserve it by pointing out to you that you are disinheriting your—other children. They bear your name. Merely as the children of a once-loved wife, now fallen from her position, they have a claim to an assured existence. I tell you plainly that I cannot accept the trust with which you propose to honor me unless their future is secured.'

"The Count trembled violently at the words, and tears came into his eyes as he grasped my hand, saying, 'I did not know my man thoroughly. You have made me both glad and sorry. We will make provision for the children in the counter-deed.'

"I went with him to the door; it seemed to me that there was a glow of satisfaction in his face at the thought of this act of justice.

"Now, Camille, this is how a young wife takes the first step to the brink of a precipice. A quadrille, a ballad, a picnic party is sometimes cause sufficient of frightful evils. You are hurried on by the presumptuous voice of vanity and pride, on the faith of a smile or through giddiness and folly! Shame and misery and remorse are three Furies awaiting every woman the moment she oversteps the limits—"

"Poor Camille can hardly keep awake," the Vicomtesse hastily broke in.—"Go to bed, child; you have no need of appalling pictures to keep you pure in heart and conduct."

Camille de Grandlieu took the hint and went.

"You were going rather too far, dear M. Derville," said the Vicomtesse, "an attorney is not a mother of daughters nor yet a preacher."

"But any newspaper is a thousand times—"

"Poor Derville!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, "what has come over you? Do you really imagine that I allow a daughter of mine to read the newspapers?—Go on," she added after a pause.

"Three months after everything was signed and sealed between the Count and Gobseck—"

"You can call him the Comte de Restaud, now that Camille is not here," said the Vicomtesse.

"So be it! Well, time went by, and I saw nothing of the counter-deed, which by rights should have been in my hands. An attorney in Paris lives in such a whirl of business that with certain exceptions which we make for ourselves, we have not the time to give each individual client the amount of interest which he himself takes in his affairs. Still, one day when Gobseck came to dine with me, I asked him as we left the table if he knew how it was that I had heard no more of M. de Restaud.

" 'There are excellent reasons for that,' he said; 'the noble Count is at death's door. He is one of the soft stamp that cannot learn how to put an end to chagrin, and allow it to wear them out instead. Life is a craft, a profession; every man must take the trouble to learn that business. When he has learned what life is by dint of painful experiences, the fibre of him is toughened, and acquires a certain elasticity, so that he has his sensibilities under his own control; he disciplines himself till his nerves are like steel springs, which always bend, but never break; given a sound digestion, and a man in such training ought to live as long as the cedars of Lebanon, and famous trees they are.'

" 'Then is the Count actually dying?' I asked.

" 'That is possible,' said Gobseck; 'the winding up of his estate will be a juicy bit of business for you.'

"I looked at my man, and said, by way of sounding him:

" 'Just explain to me how it is that we, the Count and I, are the only men in whom you take an interest?'

"'Because you are the only two who have trusted me without finessing,' he said.

"Although this answer warranted my belief that Gobseck would act fairly even if the counter-deed were lost, I resolved to go to see the Count. I pleaded a business engagement, and we separated.

"I went straight to the Rue du Helder, and was shown into a room where the Countess sat playing with her children. When she heard my name, she sprang up and came to meet me, then she sat down and pointed without a word to a chair by the fire. Her face wore the inscrutable mask beneath which women of the world conceal their most vehement emotions. Trouble had withered that face already. Nothing of its beauty now remained, save the marvellous outlines in which its principal charm had lain.

"'It is essential, madame, that I should speak to M. le Comte—'

"'If so, you would be more favored than I am,' she said, interrupting me. 'M. de Restaud will see no one. He will hardly allow his doctor to come, and will not be nursed even by me. When people are ill, they have such strange fancies! They are like children, they do not know what they want.'

"'Perhaps, like children, they know very well what they want.'

"The Countess reddened. I almost repented a thrust worthy of Gobseck. So, by way of changing the conversation, I added, 'But M. de Restaud cannot possibly lie there alone all day, madame.'

"'His oldest boy is with him,' she said.

"It was useless to gaze at the Countess; she did not blush this time, and it looked to me as if she were resolved more firmly than ever that I should not penetrate into her secrets.

"'You must understand, madame, that my proceeding is no way indiscreet. It is strongly to his interest—' I bit my lips, feeling that I had gone the wrong way to work. The Countess immediately took advantage of my slip.

" 'My interests are in no way separate from my husband's, sir,' said she. 'There is nothing to prevent your addressing yourself to me—'

" 'The business which brings me here concerns no one but M. le Comte,' I said firmly.

" 'I will let him know of your wish to see him.'

"The civil tone and expression assumed for the occasion did not impose upon me; I divined that she would never allow me to see her husband. I chatted on about indifferent matters for a little while, so as to study her; but, like all women who have once begun to plot for themselves, she could dissimulate with the rare perfection, which, in your sex, means the last degree of perfidy. If I may dare to say it, I looked for anything from her, even a crime. She produced this feeling in me, because it was so evident from her manner and in all that she did or said, down to the very inflections of her voice, that she had an eye to the future. I went.

"Now I will pass on to the final scenes of this adventure, throwing in a few circumstances brought to light by time, and some details guessed by Gobseck's perspicacity or by my own.

"When the Comte de Restaud apparently plunged into the vortex of dissipation, something passed between the husband and wife, something which remains an impenetrable secret, but the wife sank even lower in the husband's eyes. As soon as he became so ill that he was obliged to take to his bed, he manifested his aversion for the Countess and the two youngest children. He forbade them to enter his room, and any attempt to disobey his wishes brought on such dangerous attacks that the doctor implored the Countess to submit to her husband's wish.

"Mme. de Restaud had seen the family estates and property, nay, the very mansion in which she lived, pass into the hands of Gobseck, who appeared to play the fantastic part of ogre so far as their wealth was concerned. She partially understood what her husband was doing, no doubt. M. de

Trailles was travelling in England (his creditors had been a little too pressing of late), and no one else was in a position to enlighten the lady, and explain that her husband was taking precautions against her at Gobseck's suggestion. It is said that she held out for a long while before she gave the signature required by French law for the sale of the property; nevertheless the Count gained his point. The Countess was convinced that her husband was realizing his fortune, and that somewhere or other there would be a little bunch of notes representing the amount; they had been deposited with a notary, or perhaps at the Bank, or in some safe hiding-place. Following out her train of thought, it was evident that M. de Restaud must of necessity have some kind of document in his possession by which any remaining property could be recovered and handed over to his son.

"So she made up her mind to keep the strictest possible watch over the sick-room. She ruled despotically in the house, and everything in it was submitted to this feminine espionage. All day she sat in the salon adjoining her husband's room, so that she could hear every syllable that he uttered, every least movement that he made. She had a bed put there for her of a night, but she did not sleep very much. The doctor was entirely in her interests. Such wifely devotion seemed praiseworthy enough. With the natural subtlety of perfidy, she took care to disguise M. de Restaud's repugnance for her, and feigned distress so perfectly that she gained a sort of celebrity. Strait-laced women were even found to say that she had expiated her sins. Always before her eyes she beheld a vision of the destitution to follow on the Count's death if her presence of mind should fail her; and in these ways the wife, repulsed from the bed of pain on which her husband lay and groaned, had drawn a charmed circle round about it. So near, yet kept at a distance; all-powerful, but in disgrace, the apparently devoted wife was lying in wait for death and opportunity; crouching like the ant-lion at the bottom of his spiral pit, ever on the watch for

the prey that cannot escape, listening to the fall of every grain of sand.

"The strictest censor could not but recognize that the Countess pushed maternal sentiment to the last degree. Her father's death had been a lesson to her, people said. She worshipped her children. They were so young that she could hide the disorders of her life from their eyes, and could win their love; she had given them the best and most brilliant education. I confess that I cannot help admiring her and feeling sorry for her. Gobseck used to joke me about it. Just about that time she had discovered Maxime's baseness, and was expiating the sins of the past in tears of blood. I am sure of it. Hateful as were the measures which she took for regaining control of her husband's money, were they not the result of a mother's love, and a desire to repair the wrongs she had done her children? And again, it may be, like many a woman who has experienced the storms of lawless love, she felt a longing to lead a virtuous life again. Perhaps she only learned the worth of that life when she came to reap the woful harvest sown by her errors.

"Every time that little Ernest came out of his father's room, she put him through a searching examination as to all that his father had done or said. The boy willingly complied with his mother's wishes, and told her even more than she asked in her anxious affection, as he thought.

"My visit was a ray of light for the Countess. She was determined to see in me the instrument of the Count's vengeance, and resolved that I should not be allowed to go near the dying man. I augured ill of all this, and earnestly wished for an interview, for I was not easy in my mind about the fate of the counter-deed. If it should fall into the Countess's hands, she might turn it to her own account, and that would be the beginning of a series of interminable lawsuits between her and Gobseck. I knew the usurer well enough to feel convinced that he would never give up the property to her; there was room for plenty of legal quibbling over a series of transfers, and I alone knew all the ins and outs of

the matter. I was minded to prevent such a tissue of misfortune, so I went to the Countess a second time.

"I have noticed, madame," said Derville, turning to the Vicomtesse, and speaking in a confidential tone, "certain moral phenomena to which we do not pay enough attention. I am naturally an observer of human nature, and instinctively I bring a spirit of analysis to the business that I transact in the interest of others, when human passions are called into lively play. Now, I have often noticed, and always with new wonder, that two antagonists almost always divine each other's inmost thoughts and ideas. Two enemies sometimes possess a power of clear insight into mental processes, and read each other's minds as two lovers read in either soul. So when we came together, the Countess and I, I understood at once the reason of her antipathy for me, disguised though it was by the most gracious forms of politeness and civility. I had been forced to be her confidant, and a woman cannot but hate the man before whom she is compelled to blush. And she on her side knew that if I was the man in whom her husband placed confidence, that husband had not as yet given up his fortune.

"I will spare you the conversation, but it abides in my memory as one of the most dangerous encounters in my career. Nature had bestowed on her all the qualities which, combined, are irresistibly fascinating; she could be pliant and proud by turns, and confiding and coaxing in her manner; she even went so far as to try to arouse curiosity and kindle love in her effort to subjugate me. It was a failure. As I took my leave of her, I caught a gleam of hate and rage in her eyes that made me shudder. We parted enemies. She would fain have crushed me out of existence; and for my own part, I felt pity for her, and for some natures pity is the deadliest of insults. This feeling pervaded the last representations I put before her; and when I left her, I left, I think, dread in the depths of her soul, by declaring that, turn which way she would, ruin lay inevitably before her.

"'If I were to see M. le Comte, your children's property at any rate would—'

"'I should be at your mercy,' she said, breaking in upon me, disgust in her gesture.

"Now that we had spoken frankly, I made up my mind to save the family from impending destitution. I resolved to strain the law at need to gain my ends, and this was what I did. I sued the Comte de Restaud for a sum of money, ostensibly due to Gobseck, and gained judgment. The Countess, of course, did not allow him to know of this, but I had gained my point, I had a right to affix seals to everything on the death of the Count. I bribed one of the servants in the house—the man undertook to let me know at any hour of the day or night if his master should be at the point of death, so that I could intervene at once, scare the Countess with a threat of affixing seals, and so secure the counter-deed.

"I learned later on that the woman was studying the Code, with her husband's dying moans in her ears. If we could picture the thoughts of those who stand about a death-bed, what fearful sights should we not see? Money is always the motive-spring of the schemes elaborated, of all the plans that are made and the plots that are woven about it! Let us leave these details, nauseating in the nature of them; but perhaps they may have given you some insight into all that this husband and wife endured; perhaps too they may unveil much that is passing in secret in other houses.

"For two months the Comte de Restaud lay on his bed, alone, and resigned to his fate. Mortal disease was slowly sapping the strength of mind and body. Unaccountable and grotesque sick fancies preyed upon him; he would not suffer them to set his room in order, no one should nurse him, he would not even allow them to make his bed. All his surroundings bore the marks of this last degree of apathy, the furniture was out of place, the daintiest trifles were covered with dust and cobwebs. In health he had been a man of refined and expensive tastes, now he positively delighted

in the comfortless look of the room. A host of objects required in illness—rows of medicine bottles, empty and full, most of them dirty, crumpled linen and broken plates, littered the writing-table, chairs, and chimney-piece. An open warming-pan lay on the floor before the grate; a bath, still full of mineral water, had not been taken away. The sense of coming dissolution pervaded all the details of an unsightly chaos. Signs of death appeared in things inanimate before the Destroyer came to the body on the bed. The Comte de Restaud could not bear the daylight, the Venetian shutters were closed, darkness deepened the gloom in the dismal chamber. The sick man himself had wasted greatly. All the life in him seemed to have taken refuge in the still brilliant eyes. The livid whiteness of his face was something horrible to see, enhanced as it was by the long dank locks of hair that straggled along his cheeks, for he would never suffer them to cut it. He looked like some religious fanatic in the desert. Mental suffering was extinguishing all human instincts in this man of scarce fifty years of age, whom all Paris had known as so brilliant and so successful.

"One morning at the beginning of December, 1824, he looked up at Ernest, who sat at the foot of his bed gazing at his father with wistful eyes.

" 'Are you in pain?' the little Vicomte asked.

" 'No,' said the Count, with a ghastly smile, 'it all lies *here and about my heart!*'

"He pointed to his forehead, and then laid his wasted fingers on his hollow chest. Ernest began to cry at the sight.

" 'How is it that M. Derville does not come to me?' the Count asked his servant (he thought that Maurice was really attached to him, but the man was entirely in the Countess's interest)—'What! Maurice!' and the dying man suddenly sat upright in his bed, and seemed to recover all his presence of mind, 'I have sent for my attorney seven or eight times during the last fortnight, and he does not come!' he cried. 'Do you imagine that I am to be trifled with? Go for him,

at once, this very instant, and bring him back with you. If you do not carry out my orders, I shall get up and go myself.'

"'Madame,' said the man as he came into the salon, 'you heard M. le Comte; what ought I to do?'

"'Pretend to go to the attorney, and when you come back, tell your master that his man of business is forty leagues away from Paris on an important lawsuit. Say that he is expected back at the end of the week.—Sick people never know how ill they are,' thought the Countess; 'he will wait till the man comes home.'

"The doctor had said on the previous evening that the Count could scarcely live through the day. When the servant came back two hours later to give that hopeless answer, the dying man seemed to be greatly agitated.

"'O God!' he cried again and again, 'I put my trust in none but Thee.'

"For a long while he lay and gazed at his son, and spoke in a feeble voice at last.

"'Ernest, my boy, you are very young; but you have a good heart; you can understand, no doubt, that a promise given to a dying man is sacred; a promise to a father . . . Do you feel that you can be trusted with a secret, and keep it so well and closely that even your mother herself shall not know that you have a secret to keep? There is no one else in this house whom I can trust to-day. You will not betray my trust, will you?'

"'No, father.'

"'Very well, then, Ernest, in a minute or two I will give you a sealed packet that belongs to M. Derville; you must take such care of it that no one can know that you have it; then you must slip out of the house and put the letter into the post-box at the corner.'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Can I depend upon you?'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Come and kiss me. You have made death less bitter to me, dear boy. In six or seven years' time you will under-

stand the importance of this secret, and you will be well rewarded then for your quickness and obedience, you will know then how much I love you. Leave me alone for a minute, and let no one—no matter whom—come in meanwhile.'

"Ernest went out and saw his mother standing in the next room.

" 'Ernest,' said she, 'come here.'

"She sat down, drew her son to her knees, and clasped him in her arms, and held him tightly to her heart.

" 'Ernest, your father said something to you just now.'

" 'Yes, mamma.'

" 'What did he say?'

" 'I cannot repeat it, mamma.'

" 'Oh, my dear child!' cried the Countess, kissing him in rapture. 'You have kept your secret; how glad that makes me! Never tell a lie; never fail to keep your word—those are two principles which should never be forgotten.'

" 'Oh! mamma, how beautiful you are! *You* have never told a lie, I am quite sure.'

" 'Once or twice, Ernest dear, I have lied. Yes, and I have not kept my word under circumstances which speak louder than all precepts. Listen, my Ernest, you are big enough and intelligent enough to see that your father drives me away, and will not allow me to nurse him, and this is not natural, for you know how much I love him.'

" 'Yes, mamma.'

"The Countess began to cry. 'Poor child!' she said, 'this misfortune is the result of treacherous insinuations. Wicked people have tried to separate me from your father to satisfy their greed. They mean to take all our money from us and to keep it for themselves. If your father were well, the division between us would soon be over; he would listen to me; he is loving and kind; he would see his mistake. But now his mind is affected, and his prejudices against me have become a fixed idea, a sort of mania with him. It is one result of his illness. Your father's fond-

ness for you is another proof that his mind is deranged. Until he fell ill you never noticed that he loved you more than Pauline and Georges. It is all caprice with him now. In his affection for you he might take it into his head to tell you to do things for him. If you do not want to ruin us all, my darling, and to see your mother begging her bread like a pauper woman, you must tell her everything—'

"'Ah!' cried the Count. He had opened the door and stood there, a sudden, half-naked apparition, almost as thin and fleshless as a skeleton.

"His smothered cry produced a terrible effect upon the Countess; she sat motionless, as if a sudden stupor had seized her. Her husband was as white and wasted as if he had risen out of his grave.

"'You have filled my life to the full with trouble, and now you are trying to vex my deathbed, to warp my boy's mind, and make a depraved man of him!' he cried hoarsely.

"The Countess flung herself at his feet. His face, working with the last emotions of life, was almost hideous to see.

"'Mercy! mercy!' she cried aloud, shedding a torrent of tears.

"'Have you shown me any pity?' he asked. 'I allowed you to squander your own money, and now do you mean to squander my fortune, too, and ruin my son?'

"'Ah! well, yes, have no pity for me, be merciless to me!' she cried. 'But the children? Condemn your widow to live in a convent; I will obey you; I will do anything, anything that you bid me, to expiate the wrong I have done you, if that so the children may be happy! The children! Oh, the children!'

"'I have only one child,' said the Count, stretching out a wasted arm, in his despair, toward his son.

"'Pardon a penitent woman, a penitent woman! . . .' wailed the Countess, her arms about her husband's damp feet. She could not speak for sobbing; vague, incoherent sounds broke from her parched throat.

"'You dare to talk of penitence after all that you said

to Ernest!' exclaimed the dying man, shaking off the Countess, who lay grovelling over his feet.—'You turn me to ice!' he added, and there was something appalling in the indifference with which he uttered the words. 'You have been a bad daughter; you have been a bad wife; you will be a bad mother.'

"The wretched woman fainted away. The dying man reached his bed and lay down again, and a few hours later sank into unconsciousness. The priests came and administered the sacraments.

"At midnight he died; the scene that morning had exhausted his remaining strength, and on the stroke of midnight I arrived with Daddy Gobseck. The house was in confusion, and under cover of it we walked up into the little salon adjoining the death-chamber. The three children were there in tears, with two priests, who had come to watch with the dead. Ernest came over to me, and said that his mother desired to be alone in the Count's room.

" 'Do not go in,' he said; and I admired the child for his tone and gesture; 'she is praying there.'

"Gobseck began to laugh that soundless laugh of his, but I felt too much touched by the feeling in Ernest's little face to join in the miser's sardonic amusement. When Ernest saw that we moved toward the door, he planted himself in front of it, crying out, 'Mamma, here are some gentlemen in black who want to see you!'

"Gobseck lifted Ernest out of the way as if the child had been a feather, and opened the door.

"What a scene it was that met our eyes! The room was in frightful disorder; clothes and papers and rags lay tossed about in a confusion horrible to see in the presence of Death; and there, in the midst, stood the Countess in dishevelled despair, unable to utter a word, her eyes glittering. The Count had scarcely breathed his last before his wife came in and forced open the drawers and the desk; the carpet was strewn with litter, some of the furniture and boxes were broken, the signs of violence could be seen every-

where. But if her search had at first proved fruitless, there was that in her excitement and attitude which led me to believe that she had found the mysterious documents at last. I glanced at the bed, and professional instinct told me all that had happened. The mattress had been flung contemptuously down by the bedside, and across it, face downward, lay the body of the Count, like one of the paper envelopes that strewed the carpet—he too was nothing now but an envelope. There was something grotesquely horrible in the attitude of the stiffening rigid limbs.

"The dying man must have hidden the counter-deed under his pillow to keep it safe so long as life should last; and his wife must have guessed his thought; indeed, it might be read plainly in his last dying gesture, in the convulsive clutch of his claw-like hands. The pillow had been flung to the floor at the foot of the bed; I could see the print of her heel upon it. At her feet lay a paper with the Count's arms on the seals; I snatched it up, and saw that it was addressed to me. I looked steadily at the Countess with the pitiless clear-sightedness of an examining magistrate confronting a guilty creature. The contents were blazing in the grate; she had flung them on the fire at the sound of our approach, imagining, from a first hasty glance at the provisions which I had suggested for her children, that she was destroying a will which disinherited them. A tormented conscience and involuntary horror of the deed which she had done had taken away all power of reflection. She had been caught in the act, and possibly the scaffold was rising before her eyes, and she already felt the felon's branding iron.

"There she stood gasping for breath, waiting for us to speak, staring at us with haggard eyes.

"I went across to the grate and pulled out an unburned fragment. 'Ah, madame!' I exclaimed, 'you have ruined your children! Those papers were their titles to their property.'

"Her mouth twitched, she looked as if she were threatened by a paralytic seizure.

"'Eh! eh!' cried Gobseck; the harsh, shrill tone grated upon our ears like the sound of a brass candlestick scratching a marble surface.

"There was a pause, then the old man turned to me and said quietly:

"'Do you intend Mme. la Comtesse to suppose that I am not the rightful owner of the property sold to me by her late husband? This house belongs to me now.'

"A sudden blow on the head from a bludgeon would have given me less pain and astonishment. The Countess saw the look of hesitation in my face.

"'Monsieur,' she cried, 'Monsieur!' She could find no other words.

"'You are a trustee, are you not?' I asked.

"'That is possible.'

"'Then do you mean to take advantage of this crime of hers?'

"'Precisely.'

"I went at that, leaving the Countess sitting by her husband's bedside, shedding hot tears. Gobseck followed me. Outside in the street I separated from him, but he came after me, flung me one of those searching glances with which he probed men's minds, and said in the husky flute-tones, pitched in a shriller key:

"'Do you take it upon yourself to judge me?'

"From that time forward we saw little of each other. Gobseck let the Count's mansion on lease; he spent the summers on the country estates. He was a lord of the manor in earnest, putting up farm buildings, repairing mills and roadways, and planting timber. I came across him one day in a walk in the Jardin des Tuileries.

"'The Countess is behaving like a heroine,' said I; 'she gives herself up entirely to the children's education; she is giving them a perfect bringing up. The oldest boy is a charming young fellow—'

"'That is possible.'

"'But ought you not to help Ernest?' I suggested.

"'Help him!' cried Gobseck. 'Not I! Adversity is the greatest of all teachers; adversity teaches us to know the value of money and the worth of men and women. Let him set sail on the seas of Paris; when he is a qualified pilot, we will give him a ship to steer.'

"I left him without seeking an explanation of his words.

"M. de Restaud's mother has prejudiced him against me, and he is very far from taking me as his legal adviser; still, I went to see Gobseck last week to tell him about Ernest's love for Mlle. Camille, and pressed him to carry out his contract, since that young Restaud is just of age.

"I found that the old bill-discounter had been kept to his bed for a long time by the complaint of which he was to die. He put me off, saying that he would give the matter his attention when he could get up again and see after his business; his idea being no doubt that he would not give up any of his possessions so long as the breath was in him; no other reason could be found for his shuffling answer. He seemed to me to be much worse than he at all suspected. I stayed with him long enough to discern the progress of a passion which age had converted into a sort of craze. He wanted to be alone in the house, and had taken the rooms one by one as they fell vacant. In his own room he had changed nothing; the furniture which I knew so well sixteen years ago looked the same as ever; it might have been kept under a glass case. Gobseck's faithful old portress, with her husband, a pensioner, who sat in the entry while she was upstairs, was still his housekeeper and charwoman, and now in addition his sick-nurse. In spite of his feebleness, Gobseck saw his clients himself as heretofore, and received sums of money; his affairs had been so simplified that he only needed to send his pensioner out now and again on an errand, and could carry on business in his bed.

"After the treaty, by which France recognized the Haytian Republic, Gobseck was one of the members of the com-

mission appointed to liquidate claims and assess repayments due by Hayti; his special knowledge of old fortunes in San Domingo, and the planters and their heirs and assigns to whom the indemnities were due, had led to his nomination. Gobseck's peculiar genius had then devised an agency for discounting the planters' claims on the government. The business was carried on under the names of Werbrust and Gigonnet, with whom he shared the spoil without disbursements, for his knowledge was accepted instead of capital. The agency was a sort of distillery, in which money was extracted from doubtful claims, and the claims of those who knew no better or had no confidence in the government. As a liquidator, Gobseck could make terms with the large landed proprietors; and these, either to gain a higher percentage of their claims, or to insure prompt settlements, would send him presents in proportion to their means. In this way presents came to be a kind of percentage upon sums too large to pass through his control, while the agency bought up cheaply the small and dubious claims, or the claims of those persons who preferred a little ready money to a deferred and somewhat hazy repayment by the Republic. Gobseck was the insatiable boa-constrictor of the great business. Every morning he received his tribute, eying it like a Nabob's prime minister, as he considers whether he will sign a pardon. Gobseck would take anything, from the present of game sent him by some poor devil or the pound's weight of wax candles from devout folk, to the rich man's plate and the speculator's gold snuff-box. Nobody knew what became of the presents sent to the old money-lender. Everything went in, but nothing came out.

"'On the word of an honest woman,' said the portress, an old acquaintance of mine, 'I believe he swallows it all and is none the fatter for it; he is as thin and dried up as the cuckoo in the clock.'

"At length, last Monday, Gobseck sent his pensioner for me. The man came up to my private office.

"'Be quick and come, M. Derville,' said he, 'the governor is just going to hand in his checks; he has grown as yellow as a lemon; he is fidgeting to speak with you; death has fair hold of him; the rattle is working in his throat.'

"When I entered Gobseck's room, I found the dying man kneeling before the grate. If there was no fire on the hearth, there was at any rate a monstrous heap of ashes. He had dragged himself out of bed, but his strength had failed him, and he could neither go back nor find voice to complain.

"'You felt cold, old friend,' I said, as I helped him back to his bed; 'how can you do without a fire?'

"'I am not cold at all,' he said. 'No fire here! no fire! I am going, I know not where, lad,' he went on, glancing at me with blank, lightless eyes, 'but I am going away from this.—I have *carpology*,' said he (the use of the technical term showing how clear and accurate his mental processes were even now). 'I thought the room was full of live gold, and I got up to catch some of it.—To whom will all mine go, I wonder? Not to the Crown; I have left a will, look for it, Grotius. *La belle Hollandaise* had a daughter; I once saw the girl somewhere or other, in the Rue Vivienne, one evening. They call her "*La Torpille*," I believe; she is as pretty as pretty can be; look her up, Grotius. You are my executor; take what you like; help yourself. There are Strasburg pies, there, and bags of coffee, and sugar, and gold spoons. Give the Odiot service to your wife. But who is to have the diamonds? Are you going to take them, lad? There is snuff, too—sell it at Hamburg, tobaccos are worth half as much again at Hamburg. All sorts of things I have in fact, and now I must go and leave them all.—Come, Papa Gobseck, no weakness, be yourself!'

"He raised himself in bed, the lines of his face standing out as sharply against the pillow as if the profile had been cast in bronze; he stretched out a lean arm and bony hand along the coverlet and clutched it, as if so he would fain keep his hold on life, then he gazed hard at the grate, cold

as his own metallic eyes, and died in full consciousness of death. To us—the portress, the old pensioner, and myself—he looked like one of the old Romans standing behind the Consuls in Lethière's picture of the 'Death of the Sons of Brutus.'

"'He was a good-plucked one, the old Lascar!' said the pensioner in his soldierly fashion.

"But as for me, the dying man's fantastical enumeration of his riches was still sounding in my ears, and my eyes, following the direction of his, rested on that heap of ashes. It struck me that it was very large. I took the tongs, and as soon as I stirred the cinders, I felt the metal underneath, a mass of gold and silver coins, receipts taken during his illness, doubtless, after he grew too feeble to lock the money up, and could trust no one to take it to the bank for him.

"'Run for the justice of the peace,' said I, turning to the old pensioner, 'so that everything can be sealed here at once.'

"Gobseck's last words and the old portress's remarks had struck me. I took the keys of the rooms on the first and second floor to make a visitation. The first door that I opened revealed the meaning of the phrases which I took for mad ravings; and I saw the length to which covetousness goes when it survives only as an illogical instinct, the last stage of greed of which you find so many examples among misers in country towns.

"In the room next to the one in which Gobseck had died, a quantity of eatables of all kinds were stored—putrid pies, mouldy fish, nay, even shell-fish, the stench almost choked me. Maggots and insects swarmed. These comparatively recent presents were put down, pell-mell, among chests of tea, bags of coffee, and packing-cases of every shape. A silver soup tureen on the chimney-piece was full of advices of the arrival of goods consigned to his order at Havre, bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, barrels of rum, coffees, indigo, tobaccos, a perfect bazaar of colonial produce. The room itself was crammed with furniture, and silver-plate, and lamps, and vases, and pictures; there were

books, and curiosities, and fine engravings lying rolled up, unframed. Perhaps these were not all presents, and some part of this vast quantity of stuff had been deposited with him in the shape of pledges, and had been left on his hands in default of payment. I noticed jewel-cases, with ciphers and armorial-bearings stamped upon them, and sets of fine table-linen, and weapons of price; but none of the things were docketed. I opened a book which seemed to be misplaced, and found a thousand-franc note in it. I promised myself that I would go through everything thoroughly; I would try the ceilings, and floors, and walls, and cornices to discover all the gold, hoarded with such passionate greed by a Dutch miser worthy of a Rembrandt's brush. In all the course of my professional career I have never seen such impressive signs of the eccentricity of avarice.

"I went back to his room, and found an explanation of this chaos and accumulation of riches in a pile of letters lying under the paper-weights on his desk—Gobseck's correspondence with the various dealers to whom doubtless he usually sold his presents. These persons had, perhaps, fallen victims to Gobseck's cleverness, or Gobseck may have wanted fancy prices for his goods; at any rate, every bargain hung in suspense. He had not disposed of the eatables to Chevet, because Chevet would only take them of him at a loss of thirty per cent. Gobseck haggled for a few francs between the prices, and while they wrangled the goods became unsalable. Again, Gobseck had refused free delivery of his silver-plate, and declined to guarantee the weights of his coffees. There had been a dispute over each article, the first indication in Gobseck of the childishness and incomprehensible obstinacy of age, a condition of mind reached at last by all men in whom a strong passion survives the intellect.

"I said to myself, as he had said, 'To whom will all these riches go?' . . . And when I think of the grotesque information he gave me as to the present address of his heiress, I foresee that it will be my duty to search all the houses of

ill-fame in Paris to pour out an immense fortune on some worthless jade. But, in the first place, know this—that in a few days' time Ernest de Restaud will come into a fortune to which his title is unquestionable, a fortune which will put him in a position to marry Mlle. Camille, even after adequate provision has been made for his mother the Comtesse de Restaud, and his sister and brother."

"Well, dear M. Derville, we will think about it," said Mme. de Grandlieu. "M. Ernest ought to be very wealthy indeed if such a family as ours must accept that mother of his. Bear in mind that my son will be the Duc de Grandlieu one day; he will unite the estates of both the houses that bear our name, and I wish him to have a brother-in-law to his mind."

"But Restaud bears *gules, a traverse argent, on four scutcheons or, a cross sable*, and that is a very pretty coat of arms."

"That is true," said the Vicomtesse; "and besides, Camille need not see her mother-in-law."

"Mme. de Beauséant used to receive Mme. de Restaud," said the gray-haired uncle.

"Oh! that was at her great crushes," replied the Vicomtesse.

PARIS, *January*, *1830.*

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